

SEVERAL
DISCOURSES

PREACHED AT THE
TEMPLE CHURCH.

By
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AND
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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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SEVEN
DISCOURSES

PREACHED AT THE

THE NEW CHURCH

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THEO. H. LOCKE

London

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IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME I.

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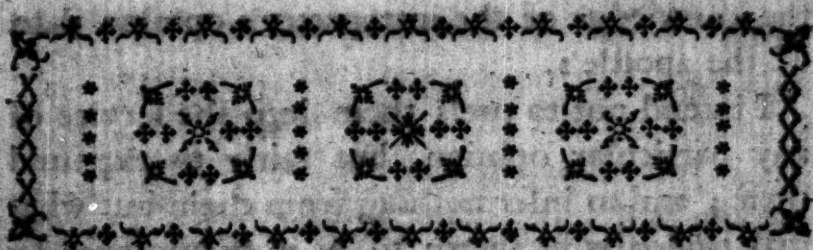
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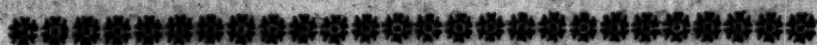
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DISCOURSE I.



PART I.



PHILIPPIANS ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

THE words now read to you have been strongly debated by Christians differing in opinion about the person and dignity of our blessed Saviour; and, as they are often handled, lead more certainly to

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the knowledge of the interpreter's opinion than of the apostle's.

I intend not to press them into the service of any particular opinion, but fairly to expound them; and to infer nothing from them but what may evidently be shewn to be in them, even by the necessity of the apostle's argument. To avoid obscurity and confusion, I shall proceed in the following method.

First, I shall represent to you the apostle's argument entire and by itself.

Secondly, I shall consider the several things implied in it; which, with respect to this particular argument, we may call the principles upon which the apostle reasons.

Thirdly, By comparing one part with another, I shall endeavour to lay before you the true sense and meaning of each part.

First, then, I shall represent to you the apostle's argument entire and by itself.

At the beginning of this second chapter St Paul exhorts the Philippians to be at peace and unity among themselves, to love one another, and to be of the same mind, mutually aiding and assisting each other in all things. Hear his own words: "If there be therefore any consolation
" in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded,
" having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." And then, like a wise physician, he searches to the bottom of the evil which he would cure; and well knowing that pride and

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vain-glory are the perpetual sources of strife and contention, the bane of mutual love and charity, he exhorts them to fly from these evils, presses them to lowliness of mind, and admonishes them not to overvalue themselves, nor undervalue others; but that they should practise humility towards one another, each esteeming other better than themselves. Thus far he advances in the two next verses: "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but, in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

To support this doctrine, and to enforce their obedience to it, he sets before them the example of Christ, and in lively colours represents his great humility: he shews them how much below himself he descended for their sakes; how truly great he was, and how truly low he made himself; by nature how much higher than the highest, by choice how much lower than the lowest. "Let this mind," says he, "be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, *he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*" And that their obedience might want no due encouragement, he sets before them, from the same ex-

ample, what glorious rewards they might promise themselves hereafter for their present humility and lowliness of mind: for this abandoned, this crucified Jesus, was not left to sink under the obscurity of his voluntary humility; but, as a reward of his humility and sufferings, he was raised to the highest pitch of dignity and power: "Wherefore," says he, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This then is the whole of the apostle's argument.

Let us now, in the second place, consider the several things implied in it; which, with respect to this particular argument, we may call *the principles* upon which the apostle reasons.

And first, you may observe, that the apostle here evidently points out to us three different states and conditions of Christ: The first is his state of dignity, from which he willingly descended, expressed in those words, *Who being in the form of God*. The second is the state of humility, to which he descended, in those words; *He made himself of no reputation*. The third is his state of glory and exaltation, intimated in those words, *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him*. These three states or conditions of Christ are essential to the apostle's argument: for take away any one of them, and the example which

the apostle would propose is lost; not only the force of the argument is lessened, but the argument itself entirely destroyed. For instance, if you remove the first state, that of his natural dignity and excellence, the second state will be no longer a state of humiliation, nor Christ any longer an example of humility: for if he was not better than a servant before he was a servant, his being a servant was his lot and condition, not his choice; it was owing to the order of Nature and Providence, and not to his humility; and he was no more humble in being born to be a servant than others are who are born to the same state, and often too without the humility which is proper and necessary to their condition.

Secondly, It is implied in the argument, that he was in possession of whatever belonged to his state of dignity and excellence before he underwent any thing that belonged to his state of humiliation: for his voluntarily descending from his dignity to a lower and meaner condition, is the very act and real ground and foundation of his humility; and therefore, whatever is meant by his being in the form of God, or whatever is meant by his being made in the likeness of men, thus much at least is evident, that he was in the form of God before he was made in the likeness of men, because his being made in the likeness of men is given as one great instance of his humility: but his being in the form of God was his very dignity and excellence; and therefore, as it is necessarily supposed that his dignity was

antecedent to his humility, it is likewise necessary to assert, that he was *in the form of God* before he was made *in the likeness of man*.

Thirdly, It is necessarily implied in the argument, that he underwent whatever belonged to his state of humiliation, before he enjoyed any thing that belonged to his state of exaltation; because his exaltation was the effect and reward of his humility, and being purchased and obtained by his humility, it could not be antecedent to it; consequently it necessarily follows, that his natural state of dignity, and his acquired state of exaltation, are two perfectly different and distinct states, since one was evidently antecedent to, the other as evidently consequent of his humiliation: from whence it follows, that his being in the form of God, being the dignity which he was possessed of before his humiliation, does not belong to him in virtue of any thing he did or suffered, nor is any part of that glory to which he was exalted, or which he received after, or upon account of his sufferings.

This ought to be the more particularly insisted on, because it is a common mistake to think, that because Christ was exalted to glory at his resurrection, and, *for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour*, as the apostle to the Hebrews speaks, that therefore all glory and honour, and all dignity and excellence, which are ever ascribed to him, belong to him only in consequence of his suffering and obedience. From hence it is that some men think it a sufficient answer to all arguments drawn from the attributes of power and knowledge, and the

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like, to prove the eternity and divinity of the Logos, to say, that Christ received his glory at his resurrection, and was made perfect through sufferings, and therefore the glory and power which are any where ascribed to him, are not his natural perfections, but his acquired honours, and of no ancients a date than the redemption: but this is not to answer the arguments, but to confound the distinct states of glory which belong to Christ: the glory which he had with the Father before the worlds, and the glory which he received from the Father at the redemption; one the glory of nature, the other the glory of office; one the glory of the eternal Logos, the other the glory of the Son of man.

Thus, for instance, we find the glory which he had with the Father before the worlds to be expressly founded upon his creating the worlds: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist," Col. i. 15, 16, 17. And in the very next verse the apostle mentions an honour belonging to his state of exaltation, and founds it expressly upon his resurrection, as he has done what went before upon his power of creation: "And he is," says he, "the Head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead," v. 18.

As Lord of all, he is styled *the first-born of every creature*; as head of the church, *first-born from the dead*. These then are different states, and founded in different characters.

Thus in St John we may often observe the same difference. To raise the dead is a power equivalent to that of creation; and therefore St John tells us, "The hour is coming, and now" is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the "Son of God," chap. v. 25. In the very next verse but one, speaking of his being Judge of the world, which belongs to him in virtue of the redemption, and is one of the glories of his exaltation, he says, that "the Father hath given him" authority to execute judgment also, because "he is the Son of man." Surely it is not for nothing that St John, in the compass of four or five lines, speaks of him under different characters; and what can the reason be but that there are distinct powers and glories belonging to his distinct states? And therefore when the evangelist mentions the powers of one kind, it was necessary to mention the proper character from whence they flowed; when he mentioned the powers of the other kind, it was necessary to mention the other character to which they belonged; and therefore it is that he says, the dead shall be raised by *the voice of the Son of God*, but they shall be judged by *the voice of the Son of man*.

The same likewise may be observed in the first chapter of the Hebrews. In the second and third verses the apostle describes the dignity and excellence of the person whom God sent to our redemption: "He hath in these last days spoken

unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds: Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power." Thus far he evidently describes the glory which Christ had with the Father before the worlds; for this is the character of the person whom he sent to redeem us. Then it follows, "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." The apostle, who had before spoken of the state of dignity which he had before the worlds, now speaks of his state of exaltation, which he received after his sufferings. According to the dignity of nature, he was "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and the upholder of all things by the word of his power:" but according to the honour of his office, after "he had purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

In the ninth verse of the second chapter the apostle says, that Jesus was *made a little lower* than the angels, and yet here he says he was *made better* than the angels: if he was made lower in order to redeem us, it seems to imply he was really and by nature higher; and if he

was made higher, it seems to imply he was really and by nature lower: but this difficulty vanishes, by rightly distinguishing his three states, of dignity, of humiliation, and of exaltation; which you see evidently mentioned in the Philippians, the place now under consideration, and so often supposed and referred to in other parts of holy writ. According to this key, we may expound the apostle to the Hebrews by the apostle to the Philippians: for, when he, who was in the form of God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, he was then in these several respects *made lower than the angels*; but when, after his suffering death upon the cross, he was exalted by God, and had a name given him above every name, then he was made so much better than the angels, as he had by inheritance a more excellent name than they; a name to which even they were to pay their homage and adoration.

In the beginning of St John's gospel we find him thus described: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." And in the viiith chapter we find our Saviour giving this testimony of himself, *Before Abraham was, I am*. Suppose he had said, *Before Abraham was, I was*; thus much at least would have been the consequence, that he had an existence before Abraham; and yet he was born into the world long after Abraham; evidently

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then the result would have been, that he had long existed before his coming into the world: but now that he says, *Before Abraham was, I am*, something more is implied; something that peculiarly belongs to the expression, *I am*; and what that is we may learn from the original use of the words. They are the words which God made choice of to express his own eternity and power: when Moses enquired after the name of God, he answered him, "I AM THAT I AM: " Thus shalt thou say unto the children of " Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you," *Exod. iii. 14.* What now could tempt our Saviour to use and apply this expression to himself? He knew it never had been applied to any but God, and would have been, in man so applying it, in the highest degree, committing *the robbery* of making himself *equal with God*: besides, they are a mere solecism, and, according to analogy of language, express nothing: no idea belongs to them; for a man cannot in his mind carry the present time back, and make it antecedent to the time already past; and therefore to say, *Before such a thing was, I am*, is shuffling ideas together, which can have no place in the mind or understanding. If therefore you admit the expression to have any meaning, you must allow the *I am* to belong to Christ, in its proper and peculiar use, as signifying eternity and permanency of duration. For the present, then, let this rest; observing only, that here we find him asserting his own eternity, and St John ascribing to him the creation of all things, which is the greatest act of power we have any notion of.

DISCOURSE I.

Let us now look to the other part of the question. The last time that our Saviour appeared to his disciples, to give them a full commission to teach and baptize, and full assurance of his being with them to the end of the world, he introduces his charge to them with mention of his own power and authority: *All power*, says he, *is given unto me in heaven and in earth*, Matth. xxviii. 18.; where it cannot be denied but that he speaks of power and authority conferred on him after his resurrection, and, in virtue of this power so received, he commissions them; they were made delegates under him, with respect to the power and authority he had then received: *All power is given unto me in heaven and earth; go, ye, therefore, and teach all nations.* The word *therefore* imports, that he is giving out commissions to them to act under the power he had received. Their commission was to teach, to baptize; and he promises them, (which promise likewise is grounded upon the same power), that he would be with them alway to the end of the world.

And having thus stated before you the fact, let us consider what weight there is in the great Socinian argument against the eternity of the Logos. All power, say they, was conferred on our Saviour after the resurrection, and therefore it is absurd to ascribe any power to him before; for he that receives all power is supposed to have none before he so received it. At first view the objection is plausible, but, when duly considered, will be found to miss the aim: for the power spoken of in St. Matthew, and the power spoken

of in St John, belong to different and entirely distinct states; and therefore his receiving all power belonging to one at this certain determinate time is no proof of his not having the other before that time. He that in virtue of a royal commission receives all power to govern any part of the kingdom, cannot be said to have had no power belonging to him before; for he had at least the natural powers of a man; the powers of nature are distinct and antecedent to the powers of his commission. And you may please to observe, that the acts of power ascribed to Christ in his different states are entirely distinct. St John, when he speaks of his eternal and inherent power, ascribes the creation of all things to him; and St Paul, speaking of the same power, ascribes to it the preservation of all things. But in the Hebrews, and in the Colossians, with respect to his power of office, he is styled *Head of the church*: and accordingly our Saviour, when he says, All power is given to him, and gives out commissions under him to the apostles, gives out none but such as refer to the church; all power is given unto me, therefore I appoint you to teach and baptize. He does not, in virtue of this power which he then received, give commissions for the creating new worlds, or for governing or preserving the old; but, as by his power received he then was constituted Head of the church, he gives out commissions only relating to the church. As for his power of creating, which is as evidently ascribed to him as any one thing, that surely is distinct from the power conferred on him at his resur-

rection; for it was something too late to receive power to create the world after the world had for many ages been created. I know what is said of a new creation by virtue and holiness; but were powers, and principalities, and dominions, were things visible and invisible, nay, were the foundations of the earth and the heavens, which the apostle says are the work of his hands, thus newly created? Was the material world redeemed, and made holy and righteous? What absurdities may we not believe, or teach, if these are the doctrines of clear and unbiaſſed reason?

To conclude, then: It is evident, that in the place now before us, and in other parts of scripture, there are three distinct states spoken of, which belong to our blessed Lord: and this observation is so material, that, without having an eye to it, there is no understanding the scripture, or the early writers of the church, in the great and long-controverted points concerning the eternity and divinity of the Son of God. For, on one side, it is very absurd, to urge the lofty expressions in scripture, or elsewhere, which belong to his last state, and describe the glories which he received in reward of his obedience, as proofs of his natural dignity, which he had before the worlds began: and, on the other side, it is equally absurd to apply the limitations in point of time or duration, or which in any other respect belong to the glories of his office, to apply them, I say, to the antecedent and inherent glories of his nature.

DISCOURSE I.

PART II.

THE three distinct states belonging to Christ Jesus, and mentioned in the words of the text, being supposed. The first, his state of dignity, which he was in possession of before the worlds began; the second, his state of humiliation, when he took upon himself the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, which ended in his death upon the cross; the third, his state of exaltation, to which he was raised by the Father, as the reward of his humility and sufferings, and which shall continue till the consummation of all things: Let us now proceed,

Thirdly, To compare the several parts of St Paul's argument together, and to examine what the apostle teaches us concerning each of these states.

As to the two last of these states, that of humiliation, and that of exaltation, the difficulties are not great. It will be readily allowed, that, in the first of the two, he was very man, subject to the infirmities of human nature, and did really undergo the shameful and bitter death of the cross; that, in the last, he is Lord and Head over the church, under God, that he now governs and directs it, and shall, at the last day, appear in the majesty of his Father, to judge the whole world. Thus far the generality of Christians are agreed, how widely soever they differ in their opinions concerning his first state, and the proper glories and dignities belonging to him before his coming into the world.

This state is described in the first verse of the text, *Who being in the form of God.* In order to set forth the great humility of Christ in becoming man, the apostle first tells us from how great and glorious a state he descended; *He was in the form of God.* The following words, as they stand in our translation, go on to describe the excellency of his glory, which was so real and transcendent a glory, *that he thought it no robbery to be, i. e. he thought himself entitled to be, equal with God.* But I shall not insist upon this translation; for it is more agreeable to the apostle's argument, and to the language made use of, to suppose him to intend, in these words, to express the first degree or instance of his humility, and that the verse should be rendered by words to this effect: *Who, being in the form of God, was not fond, or tenacious, of appearing as God;*

but made himself of no reputation. I shall not trouble you with the particular reasons of this rendering, which would lead us too far into critical enquiries: but which way soever of these two the text be understood, the *τὸ ἴσως ἰσὺν Θεῷ* will be found to belong to Jesus Christ. If he thought it no robbery to assume this equality with God, (whatever is meant by it), undoubtedly he was equal: or, if it was the effect of his humility, that he did not hold or insist upon his equality with God, then certainly he had such an equality; for where is the humility of not insisting on, or not retaining an equality, which never did or could belong to him?

I find some, in translating these words, make use of expressions purposely chosen to exclude Christ from the dignity here mentioned; for thus they make the apostle speak: Who, being in the form of God, did not arrogate, assume, or lay claim to any equality or likeness with God. But I think this language bears no analogy to the words in the original, nor can be made to agree with the aim and design of the apostle. The expression in the original is metaphorical, and alludes to the eagerness and tenaciousness with which men catch and retain the prey, which they are afraid should slip out of their hands: but I believe no language knows what it is to arrogate, assume, or lay claim to a prey. A prey is to be caught, to be held fast, but not to be assumed, or arrogated, or laid claim to. Besides, it is evidently St Paul's design to set forth the great humility of Christ Jesus:

in order to this he says, he did not greedily retain his equality with God; which, supposing the equality to belong to him, is a very great, the greatest instance of humility: but for any person who has no right or title to such equality, to arrogate or lay claim to it, is the utmost pitch of pride and madness; and if you so expound these words, you must affirm, that the apostle, to prove the great humility of Christ, endeavours to clear him of that, which imports the greatest pride and insolence imaginable. Whatever, therefore, is meant by the *τὸ ἰσμεν ἰσα Θεῷ*, St Paul evidently supposes in his argument, that it did belong to Christ before his humiliation, when he was in the form of God.

Secondly, By comparing the several parts of St Paul's argument together, it will, I think, appear, that the *μεσσην Θεῷ*, and the *τὸ ἰσμεν ἰσα Θεῷ*, here spoken of, are expressions that relate to the same thing; so that he who is possessed of the first has a right to the last. The foundation of the apostle's argument is this, That Christ, enjoying a most exalted state of glory, was not fond or tenacious of that glory, but made himself of no reputation: for this argument being wholly spent in setting forth the humility of Christ, there is no occasion of mentioning any other glory than that which, out of his great humility, he laid aside. The glory therefore which the apostle here says Christ had, and the glory which he here says he laid aside, are one and the same glory, the glory which belongs to the form of God.

DISCOURSE I. 27

But farther: Let us read this and the next verse together: "Who, being in the form of God, did not eagerly insist to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation;" (or, as the original signifies, he emptied himself), "and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." The humility of Christ consisted in changing willingly a glorious for an inglorious condition. The glorious condition which he was possessed of was the form of God; the inglorious condition to which he submitted was the form of a servant. When the apostle therefore says, "Who, being in the form of God, took upon him the form of a servant," he plainly intimates to us, that he obscured, or laid aside, the glory belonging to the form of God, when he took the form of a servant. The *form of God* therefore expresses and contains all those glories which Christ willingly suffered to be hid in his state of humility. The very same thing is expressed by the *equality with God* here mentioned; for it is said, that he did not eagerly insist to be equal with God. Now, certainly that which he did not insist to keep, and that which he emptied himself of, is one and the same thing. If therefore the glories which he laid aside were *the form of God*, and if the glories which he did not insist to keep were *this equality with God*, you must necessarily say, that the form of God and the equality with God are one and the same thing. What has hitherto been said does not sufficiently discover what the precise notion belonging to each of

these expressions is; but it shews evidently, I think, that the equality with God, whatever it means, did as properly and really belong to our blessed Lord Jesus, before his coming into the world, as the form of God did; which, as far as I remember, all allow to be the proper character of Christ in this place, however they limit and restrain it in their various expositions.

Besides, the form of the argument affords us still a farther evidence, that St Paul esteemed these characters to be proper and peculiar to Christ, to be his natural and inherent, not his borrowed glories: for, consider what it is that St Paul exhorts the Philippians to, "Look not," says he, "every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others;" that is, do not act merely upon the view of your own proper good and advantage only, but take into your consideration likewise the good and advantage of your own fellow-creatures: he exhorts them that they should not *τὰ ἑαυτῶν σκεπτεῖν*, look to their own things; but, says he, *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*. Then he sets forth, as the argument requires he should, how little Christ regarded *τὰ αὐτοῦ*, things belonging to himself; for, being in the form of God, he was not eager of appearing equal with God; This form of God, therefore, and this equality with God, were certainly those things of his own which the apostle intended to shew that he did not look to; and without taking this to be his meaning, the precept and the example cannot meet in the same point.

Suppose then here, that the form of God means the glories proper and peculiar to the presence of God, and that to be equal with God, in this place, signifies only to be clothed with equal glories, to appear in his majesty and power; yet it deserves to be considered who, and what manner of person he is, to whom the proper and peculiar glories of God, to whom his majesty and his power do belong, and so belong to him as to be his own. Should God communicate his glories to a creature, in the highest degree that a creature is capable of receiving them, yet the glories of God, so communicated to the creature, could in no sense be said to be the creature's own glories. Our own glories are those only which are proper and peculiar to our own nature; for, as the apostle elsewhere says, *One thing differeth from another thing in glory.*

But the apostle's mind will still farther appear as we go on: "He took upon him," says he, "the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself." The form of a servant is here plainly opposed to the form of God; when he laid aside the form of God, he took the form of a servant. If we can, therefore, come at the determinate meaning of either of these expressions, it will certainly lead to the knowledge of the other. The true key to this place is, I think, to be found in the first and second chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews: give me leave, therefore, for a while, to leave

the apostle to the Philippians, and to consider what the apostle to the Hebrews teaches us.

“ God,” says he, “ who at fundry times, and
“ in divers manners, spake in times past unto
“ the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last
“ days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he
“ hath appointed heir of all things, by whom
“ also he made the worlds: Who being the
“ brightness of his glory, and the express image
“ of his person, and upholding all things by
“ the word of his power,” &c.: which amounts
to no more than what the apostle to the Philip-
pians has said of him, in fewer words, *Who, being
in the form of God.* But the apostle to the He-
brews proceeds, and shews us wherein the true
difference between Christ and all other beings
lyes, and places it in this determinately, that
Christ was the Son of God, and all other beings,
even the mightiest angels, the servants of God:
“ For unto which of the angels said he at any
“ time, Thou art my son, this day have I begot-
“ ten thee? And again, I will be to him a Fa-
“ ther, and he shall be to me a Son. And again,
“ when he bringeth in the First-begotten into
“ the world, he saith, And let all the angels of
“ God worship him.” Thus you see Christ is
declared to be the Son of God, and the object
of the angels’ worship. But of the angels the
apostle adds, “ Who maketh his angels spirits,
“ and his ministers a flame of fire.” And, in
the last verse of the chapter, speaking still of
angels, he saith, “ Are they not all ministering
“ spirits?”

DISCOURSE I. 31

The image which the writer to the Hebrews seems to have before him is that of a great household: he considers God as the *Paterfamilias*, the Father of Christ, and the Lord and Maker of the universe; Christ is considered as the *Filiusfamilias*, the Son, the Heir of all things, as he styles him: other beings are the servants and attendants, of different orders, belonging to the family. And under this view it is not hard to know what the apostle to the Philippians means, when he says, Christ took upon him *the form of a servant*: he was truly the Son of the family, the Heir of all things, and had the form and majesty of his Father; but he descended from the glories of his Father, and became like one of the family, submitting to take the form and character of a servant on him. The apostle to the Philippians adds, *being made in the likeness of men*: the reason and meaning of this addition the apostle to the Hebrews will likewise teach us, chap. ii. 16. "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Angels are servants as well as men; therefore by saying Christ took on him *the form of a servant*, there was room left to suppose him to have taken the nature of angels; to shew therefore what nature he took, the apostle adds, he took the form of a servant, *in the likeness of men*, that is, in the nature of man. So then the *μορφή δούλου*, *the form of a servant*, is the common mark and character of all the creatures of God; the *ὁμοιωμα*, *the likeness* here spoken of, is the peculiar and proper cha-

factor of each species; so that the *μορφή δι' αὐτοῦ* and the *ὁμοιωμα εἰς ὅραμα* make a complete and perfect man: he was not only a man in appearance and in likeness, but in reality, having the same common nature, distinguished by the same specific differences.

The apostle to the Philippians adds; *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself.* It requires some attention to the apostle's argument to distinguish rightly between the form, the likeness, and the fashion, which are all in this place applied to Christ Jesus. In the first verse of the text the apostle says, "Who, being in the form of God, did not retain his equality with God, but emptied himself." By this equality which Christ did not retain, but emptied himself of, I think it is impossible to understand any thing else but the divine glories in which he appeared, and which, during the state of his humiliation, he laid aside: his nature he could not lay aside; he continued to be the Son of God, though he appeared not like the Son of God; and therefore the apostle adds, being man, "he was found in fashion as a man," appearing in no greater majesty and glory than what truly belonged to him as man. The fashion of a man, in this part of the text, I take to answer to the being equal with God, in the first part; that equality which he laid aside being nothing else but the *οὐχ ὅμοιος θεῷ*, the fashion, or truly divine and majestic appearance, of God. The form of God, in the first part, answers both to the form of a servant, and the likeness of men, in the second part: the

form of a servant being common to all the different orders of creatures, it did not of itself sufficiently express what nature Christ took upon him, and therefore the addition, in the likeness of men, was but necessary: but there are no different orders of beings to whom the form of God belongs; and therefore the apostle having told us that Christ was in the form of God, there wanted no addition to inform us what kind or manner of being he was, for God has not communicated his form or proper glory to any of his creatures: the form of God belongs to God only.

And thus the argument for our blessed Saviour's divinity from this text stands. He had, before he came into the world, the true and proper glories of divinity, and under the Old Testament appeared in the real majesty of his Father. Whether the proper and peculiar glories of the Divinity, and the real majesty of God, are communicable to a creature, judge ye. Besides, if the apostle, by saying Christ took the form of a servant, and the likeness of men, means, that he became indeed a very creature, and many consider what he means by the same expression in the other part, where he affirms, that Christ was in the form of God; and whether he can mean less than that he was God, above all creatures, as the Son of the family is superior to the servants, and subject to the Father as a Son, receiving from him whatever he has of power, glory, and majesty.

For the further confirmation of the exposition of the text here given, let us consider in what

manner St Paul usually applies the example of Christ, by setting it in opposition to the corrupt inclinations and passions derived from Adam. Thus, in the ivth of the Ephesians, he calls upon them "to put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and that they put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And in the first epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xv. he says, "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." There are many other places of the like import, which occur so frequently, that there is no occasion particularly to point them out.

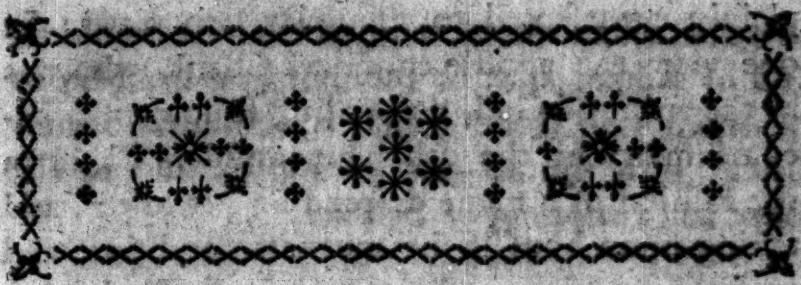
In this passage to the Philippians the apostle does not expressly draw the comparison between the first and second Adam; but the account he gives of the conduct and spirit of the second Adam is so strong a contrast to the corrupt affections of the first, that there can be but little doubt of his meaning.

Look into the history of Moses; there you will find that Adam was created *after the image of God*, and had dominion given him over the creatures of the earth, by which he became Lord of this lower world. St Paul, in the words of the text, tells us, that Christ *was in the form of God*, which gave him a dominion over the works

of nature, which had their being and owed their preservation to his power. Moses gives an account how Adam, through disobedience and a vain ambition, fell from the dignity in which he was created, and entailed misery upon his descendants. St Paul says, that Christ, through obedience and submission to the will of the Father, hath set us an example, by which, if the same mind be in us, we may recover what is lost. Moses tells us, that Adam was tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit, upon the hopes the tempter gave him, that it would make him *like to God*, and increase him in knowledge, *to know good and evil*: he thought it such an advantageous proposal, that he caught at the opportunity, and eagerly embraced the offer. St Paul's account is, that Christ, who had a right by nature to appear in the majesty and glory of God, yet voluntarily laid it aside, and lived and died in the world *in fashion as a man*. What Adam got by this bold attempt we all know: he run, like an eager hungry fish, to seize the bait, but was miserably deceived; he lost the prey, and swallowed only the hook: but Christ, for a recompence of his obedience, was highly exalted, and had a name given him which is above every name.

If we admit of this reference to the case of the first Adam, it will determine the sense of those words which in our translation are rendered, *He thought it no robbery to be equal with God*: for in that case the opposition between the

two characters would require, that it should be said of Adam, that he thought it a robbery to be equal with God; which is absolutely inconsistent with the account of Moses, and to the view and reasoning of St Paul.



DISCOURSE I.



PART III.



A*ND* being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He was in the form of God, but he was not fond of retaining, or making shew of the glories belonging to the divine form, but took upon him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. This was great humility; but this was not all; for, being man, he still descended lower; quitted the dignities and honours which even as man he might have retained, submitted to the meanest condition of the sons of men, a condition exposed to scorn and contempt, and ill usage, and at last became obedient unto death, and that not the common death of mankind, but of the vilest of slaves, even the death of the cross. The humility then of Christ is here

plainly represented to us under two views: In one view the apostle considers Christ, who was in the form of God, descending so low as to become man; in the other he considers Christ in the fashion of a man, descending yet lower, and taking upon himself the meanest condition, and undergoing the most ignominious death that either the most miserable or the most wicked of mankind had ever experienced.

I have endeavoured to explain all that belongs to the first instance of humility, by considering what the state was from which Christ descended, and what the state and condition to which he descended: I shall now consider this second instance of the humility of Christ Jesus in the same method, and lay before you, as far as I can discern the apostle's meaning, the true sense and import of the words of the text. In the first instance we learnt what St Paul's opinion was concerning our Saviour before his incarnation; in this we shall find what notion he had of him during his abode on earth.

The question, you see, is this: What notion had St Paul concerning Christ, or what manner of person did he conceive him to be, when he thus described him, *He being found in fashion as a man?*

This will appear by considering what is meant by *the fashion of a man*, and what could lead St Paul to the choice of that expression; and likewise by examining the instances of humility given in the text, *the becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross*; and considering of

what sort of person it can properly be said, that he was humble in submitting to death.

The *fashion of a man* denotes those proper and distinguishing characters which belong to a man as such, by which he is known to be what he is; that is, by which he is known to be a man, and not any other kind of being: for whoever appears with any marks or characters which shew him not to be a man, or to be more than a man, cannot be said to appear in the fashion of a man. Whoever will be at the pains to consider St Paul's use of the original word, and of the verb derived from it, will find this account to be true: thus, for instance, he tells us of Satan's *transforming* himself into an angel of light, and of his ministers *transforming* themselves into the apostles of Christ; in both places using the verb derived from the original word in this place; and in both places his meaning is, not that Satan became an angel of light, or his ministers apostles of Christ, but that Satan appeared in the fashion of an angel of light, so as not to be known from an angel of light, and his ministers in the fashion of apostles of Christ, so as not to be distinguished from them. By *the fashion of a man* then we can understand only the true and real appearances of a man.

Let us proceed then to consider what led St Paul to this expression, and why he might not as well say, and *being man*, he humbled himself, as, *being found in fashion as a man*, he humbled himself. For this we must look back to the first rise of the apostle's argument. The person here spo-

ken of, Jesus Christ, was in the form of God, but *emptied himself*: Emptied himself, of what? Not of his being or nature, but of the glories and majesty belonging to him: being in the form of God, he laid aside the glories proper to the form of God, and took upon him the form of a servant, in the likeness of men. Whatever he was as to nature and essence, when he was in the form of God, that he continued to be still, when he became man; but the *εχθρα* *εις*, the glories of *the form of God*, he laid down; and though he continued to be the same, yet, as to the *εχθρα*, as to outward dignity and appearance, he was mere man, being found, as the apostle says, *in fashion as a man*. Had the apostle conceived him, whilst here on earth, to have been mere man only, in what tolerable sense could he say of him, *being found in fashion as a man*? for in what fashion should a man be found but in the fashion of a man? What need was there of this limitation, that he was found a man as to his fashion, unless in reality he was something more than man? But if you consider the man Jesus Christ to be the same person who was in the form of God, and who, according to that dignity of nature, had a right to appear in the majesty and glory of God, it is proper to ask, How did he appear on earth? And the apostle's words are a proper answer to the question, *He was found in fashion as a man*.

The apostle perhaps had another view in the choice of this expression, *And being found in fashion as a man*; with respect to what follows, *he became obedient unto death*: for it might well seem

strange, that any should attempt the life of him, who was himself the Lord of life. He became obedient unto death; but how came he to be called to this obedience? Who was the bold man that laid hands upon this God on earth, and was vain enough to think of compassing his death? to which the apostle gives this previous answer, *He was found in fashion as a man*; as such his life was attempted, and he became obedient unto death. This I take to be the import of the word *found*; he was found in fashion as a man, and became obedient unto death. By whom was he found? By those who sought his life, and called him to the obedience, which he readily paid. If you allow the apostle to have had this view, you must needs suppose that he thought him more than mortal man, when he is at some pains to assign a reason that could tempt any one to think him liable to death. Had he been mere man, there would have wanted none of this caution and circumspection: the greatest are liable to death, and liable to fall by the attempts of the lowest, who, if they are wicked enough, and desperate enough, have ground sufficient to hope for success, from the common mortality, from which the greatest of the sons of men are not exempt.

Secondly, Let us examine the instances of humility given in the text, and consider to what sort of person they can be applied as such: *He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*. Death is the common end of all mankind; and if to die be humility, in this respect all are

equally humble. How comes Jesus Christ then to be distinguished by this instance of humility? How comes that to be humility in him which in every body else is necessity? If you speak of mere man, you may as properly say, that he is humble in having two legs or two arms, as in submitting to death, since both are equally the course and work of Nature; and yet you plainly see, that the apostle reckons it great humility in Christ that he submitted to death. What manner of person then was Christ Jesus, over whom death had no power, but through his own consent and submission? Mortal he was, or else he could not have died; more than mortal he was, or else he could not have avoided death; in which case, to die had been no humility. You must allow then, that St Paul, in arguing as he does concerning Jesus Christ, necessarily supposes him to be more than mere man; to be that person who was found in fashion as a man, because he willingly quitted the divine glories belonging to him; who died, because he willingly laid down his life, which no man could take from him.

Let me observe farther, with what accuracy St Paul speaks upon this subject. In the first instance of his humility, when he quitted the glories proper to the form of God, the apostle says, *he emptied himself*, *ἐκένωσεν ἑαυτὸν*: for the form of a servant, and the likeness of men, which he took upon him, were inconsistent with divine glories, they could make no part of them: had he retained the glories of God, he could not have come in the form of a servant, or in the likeness of men; and therefore he emptied himself of

these glories. In the second instance, the apostle considers Christ Jesus as found in fashion as a man, and humbly submitting to death, even the death of the cross. Now, to die, to die even upon a cross, has nothing in it incompatible with the fashion of a man; all who die, all who are executed, die in fashion as men; and therefore the apostle does not say here that he emptied himself, for he retained the fashion of a man, but he says, *he humbled himself*: the humility therefore here spoken of, bears no relation to the fashion of a man here spoken of; for the fashion of a man suffered no diminution, it continued one and the same: he was as much in the fashion of a man upon the cross as he was before: the humility therefore relates to the person, and his real dignity, in distinction to the appearance and fashion in which he was found. With respect to the person of Christ Jesus, who was in the form of God, to die was great humility; with respect to the fashion in which he was found, it was no humility, for he was found in fashion as a man, and he died but as the sons of men often die.

But farther: The apostle had before told us, that Christ *took upon him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men*: this indeed was great humility; for him who was in the form of God, and had a right to appear in the glories and majesty of God, for him, I say, to descend to a servile condition, to become mere man, was great humility; but, being man, to die, seems but a natural consequence, for death is the common, the natural end of all men. How comes the apostle then, after he had told us that Christ

Jesus became man, to give us this as a distinct and farther instance of his humility, that he *became obedient unto death*? This seems to be only the necessary consequence of his being man. Had he, when he became man, ceased to be what he was before, death had been but the natural and necessary consequence of the change; but though he was man, yet being Lord of all things, it was always in his power, as he himself has told us, to take up his life, and to lay it down: for, as St Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, chap. ii. 8. expresses it, speaking of those who put Christ to death, *they killed the Lord of glory, or the Prince of life*; which expression occurs likewise in St Peter's sermon, Acts iii. 15. Being then, even whilst on earth, and clothed with human flesh and blood, the very Lord of life, and upholding all things by the word of his power, he was superior to the necessity of human nature, and subject to death only because he chose to die: to die therefore was great humility; to die upon the cross still greater, submitting to the malice of those wretches, who, whilst they were destroying him, lived only by his power who was the Prince of life. It was humility, therefore, to become man: after he was man, it was humility to die, since the powers of life were in his own hand, and he could both lay down his life and take it up. If you consider what St Paul says in this view, his discourse is just, the example full; but without this support, you will hardly find either his argument, or the humility of Christ Jesus.

DISCOURSE I.

PART IV.

WHEREFORE God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. In these words the apostle sets before us the exceeding great glory to which God the Father exalted Christ, as the end and reward of his great humility and sufferings: words which very well deserve our serious attention and consideration, as instructing us in the true reason, and discovering to us the true foundation of the honour and worship and glory which the Christian church has ever, and still continues to give and pay to our blessed Lord.

There is indeed a difficulty in conceiving how any accession of glory or honour should be made to him, who was, before his coming into the world, *in the form of God*, and, as such, was in possession of the majesty and glory belonging to the form of God; and yet the apostle's argument seems to suppose an accession of honour to be made to him upon his exaltation, as the reward of his humility and obedience. For thus the argument stands: Jesus Christ, who was in the form of God, and in possession of divine glory, laid aside the divine glory, and took upon him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and, appearing as mere man, he submitted to death, even the death of the cross: wherefore God, as a reward to his humility, has *more* highly exalted him, (for so the original word signifies), and given him a name above every name. This glory therefore, according to the strain of the apostle's reasoning, ought to be a more excellent glory than the first glory; for if God gave him nothing but what he had a right to, according to the very excellency and dignity of his nature, how did he reward his humility? To exalt a man for his humility is to raise him to a station above what he had before his humility: according to parity of reason, therefore, the glory to which Christ was exalted, as a reward to his humility, ought to be a greater glory than that which he had before his humility.

But how can these things be? you will say: How can he, *who is the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person*, how can

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he be exalted in glory? or, What greater glory can we conceive than *the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father*? especially considering that Christ himself, in praying for glory for himself, prays for no other glory than that which he had before the world was: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," John xvii. 5.

To set this matter in a true light, you must consider, that the glories of nature and the glories of office are very different and distinct glories; that the apostle, in the place before us, says nothing of nature or essence; he speaks of the person Jesus Christ, and considers him as the same person, in all his different states, of glory, humility, and exaltation: the same nature which he had being in the form of God, the same he had in his state of humiliation, and now has in his state of exaltation: so that the apostle does not consider him in his exaltation as having an higher nature, or greater natural powers and dignities than he had before his exaltation; and it would indeed be very absurd to suppose he did; for the exaltation of any person does not consist in a change of nature, or natural powers, but in acquired honours and authority. When a man is raised to be a king, he is still a man, has still the natural powers of a man, without increase or diminution, though he receives new honour and new authority.

The apostle's argument then does not infer, that the natural powers and dignities of Christ

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Jesus were increased, or that they were capable of being increased, but only, that, in consequence of the redemption, God put all things immediately under him, making him head over all, and consequently entitled him to that worship, and those honours, which were not before paid to him. Christ Jesus was indeed subservient to his Father in the creation of the worlds: "By him all things were made, and without him was not any thing made that was made," John i. 3.; and yet the worship and honour which flow from the relation of the creature to the Creator, always were paid, and still are paid to the Father; for the evidence arising from the works of Nature lead to the acknowledgment of one, and but of one great Being, and therefore there could be no pretence of setting up another, either in opposition or conjunction with him, to be an object of worship: but when Christ undertook and completed the redemption of the world, then it was thought proper to make known the glory which he had before the worlds began, that we might know that we were to expect salvation from a hand that was able to save, and that the honour and duty owing to him who made us, and to him who redeemed us, might be consistent; for when Christ purchased mankind at the price of his own blood, they became his by the strictest bonds of justice and gratitude; there arose a new relation between the Redeemer and the redeemed, and the duty and worship and honour which flow from that relation are immediately owing to Christ Jesus.

Thus Christ having perfected the redemption of the world, was by the Father made Lord of all things; all things were put in subjection under him, and the head of every man is Christ: we are no longer our own, but Christ's, being bought with a price, even with the precious blood of the Son of God. This is the scripture account of the matter, almost in scripture words; and you see here is no room to speculate about nature or essence, or to suppose that Christ, before his exaltation, was less honourable, as to his nature and essence, any more than there is room to suppose that God was less honourable as to his nature before the creation, because at the creation the sons of God sung together for joy, and paid new honours and adorations to the great Creator.

Having, I hope, removed this difficulty, I shall proceed to consider the doctrine of the text in the following method.

First, That the power and authority exercised by Christ Jesus in and over the church of God are derived from this exaltation: And consequently,

Secondly, That the honour and worship paid to Christ in and by the church of God are founded in this exaltation.

Thirdly, That the power and authority exercised by Christ, and the honour and worship paid to Christ, are, and ought to be, ultimately referred to the glory of God the Father.

These propositions are so evidently contained in the words of the text, as to be subject to no

doubt in the explication: but it may be of service to shew that the doctrine is agreeable to, and is confirmed by the whole tenor of scripture.

First, I am to shew you, That all power and authority exercised by Christ Jesus in and over the church of God are derived from this exaltation.

And the first authority which I shall produce, in confirmation of this proposition, is a very great one, even that of our blessed Lord himself, who, after his resurrection, and not long before his ascension, appeared to his disciples, and gave them a solemn commission to teach and baptize in his name: but before he gave them commissions, he did, as it were, open his own, which was the foundation of theirs: "All power," says he, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth: Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," Matth. xxviii. 18, 19, 20. In this place you hear our Saviour declaring all power and authority to be given him at his resurrection; in consequence of which power he commissions his disciples to convert, baptize, and instruct the world. There is no doubt but this power is part of the exaltation which St Paul speaks of in the text, to which God raised Christ for his sufferings. You see likewise, that the powers delegated to the ministers of the church

derive themselves from this power so received; and, consequently, all acts done by them in the name of Christ are founded in the power which he received at his resurrection.

St Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, chap. i. 4. expressly tells us, that "Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." God had before, at his baptism, and at his transfiguration on the mount, declared him to be *his well-beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased*; but at his resurrection he was declared not only to be his Son, but to be his Son *with power*. If you look forward to the xivth chapter of this epistle, you will find the apostle's sense of this matter very fully and clearly expressed: "For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living:" so that the power over all things, the dominion both of the dead and the living, commenced at the resurrection, which was indeed the very first step to glory and honour which our blessed Saviour took after his state of humiliation and sufferings: for though, according to our conceptions, his pains and sufferings ended on the cross, yet in the grave there is neither honour nor glory: in his resurrection he first and truly appeared to be himself, to be the Lord of life and glory.

In his epistle to the Colossians, towards the middle of the first chapter, St Paul speaks largely of the person of Jesus Christ: he represents to them his great dignity and glory, by setting be-

fore them the part which he bore in the crea-
 tion of all things, and likewise the authority and
 power to which his Father raised him, and which
 he now exercises as Head of the body the church.
 And this place is the better worth your attention,
 because the apostle does not only distinguish be-
 tween the power by which Christ created all
 things, and the power by which he governs all
 things as Head of the body the church; but he
 has likewise distinguished and marked out to us
 the different sources and originals from whence
 these two powers flow. In the 15th verse he thus
 speaks of Jesus Christ: "Who is the image of
 " the invisible God, the first-born of every crea-
 " ture:—all things were created by him, and
 " for him. And he is before all things, and by
 " him all things consist." With respect to this
 great work of the creation, you see St Paul con-
 siders him as being before all things, as being the
 image of the invisible God, the first-born of
 every creature: immediately the apostle adds,
 " And he is head of the body, the church, who
 " is the beginning, the first-born from the dead."
 This surely is a very different beginning from
 that which he mentioned before, and yet this
 beginning, which is his resurrection, is plainly
 laid down as the foundation of the principality
 and headship which he holds over the church:
 he was the Beginning, the *Ἀρχή*, with respect to
 the creation of all things, being the first-born
 of every creature: he is the Beginning, and
 Head of the church, being the first-born from
 the dead.

I shall mention but one place more to you, and that so plain an one, that I shall not need to spend much of your time in it: it is in the epistle to the Ephesians, chap. i. 17. & seq. where St Paul tells them, that his prayer for them was, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints: And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power; Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who filleth all in all." What can be added to this description of power and authority? and yet the apostle, you see, founds all this upon his resurrection, and his exaltation consequent to it; then were all things put under his feet, then was he given to be Head over the church, and set above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named. The scripture abounds in evidence of this kind; and I think there is no

thing plainer in the gospel than that Christ Jesus is our Lord, because he hath redeemed us; that he is our King, being raised by the Father to all power and authority; that he is our Mediator and Intercessor, being set down on the right hand of God in the heavenly places. But,

Secondly, All honour and worship paid to Christ in and by the church of God are founded in this exaltation.

This is a natural consequence of what has been already said. The title which Christ Jesus has to receive honour and worship and adoration in the church, is the reason and foundation upon which honour and worship and adoration are paid him in the church. What his title is you have already heard, and, consequently, the foundation of the church's worship has already been manifested: but, that your faith may not stand in the words of man's wisdom, I will lay before you the evidence of scripture in this point also.

In the Revelation of St John we have several hymns recorded, which the church of the first-born sing to God and to his Christ; and we cannot form our devotions from a better copy than that which they have set us. In the ivth chapter, the four-and-twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Here you see plainly, that the adoration paid to God the Father is founded upon his being the

DISCOURSE I. 55

Creator of all things: look a little farther into the next chapter, and you will find the same persons praising and adoring Christ Jesus, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth." Here you as plainly see the worship paid to Christ to be founded in this, that he was slain, and did by his blood redeem us; nay, the very choir of angels sing praises to him in the same strain, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." From all which it is evident, that the worship paid to Christ is founded upon the redemption, and relates to that power and authority which he received from God at his resurrection.

In the text St Paul tells us, "that God has given Christ a name above every name;—that every tongue should confess that Christ is the Lord."—Where confession implies much more than a bare acknowledgment that Christ is the Lord: it comprehends those honours and that worship which those who heartily confess him to be the Lord will naturally and readily pay him. How this confession must be made, and from what ground it must proceed, the same apostle, in his epistle to the Romans, has very fully acquainted us: "This," says he, "is the word of faith which we preach, That if thou

“ shalt confess Jesus to be Lord,” (for so the words ought to be rendered), “ and shalt believe “ in thine heart that God hath raised him from “ the dead, thou shalt be saved,” chap. x. 8, 9. Here, you see, St Paul requires all men to honour the Lord Jesus upon this account, because *God hath raised him from the dead.* Every man *must honour the Son, even as he honoureth the Father*: this honour paid to the Son must proceed from this principle of faith, that in your heart you believe that God raised him from the dead, and made him Lord of all. This confession, grounded upon this belief, St Paul calls *the faith which we preach*, that is, the gospel-doctrine, that faith by which a man shall be saved: and this is indeed the true gospel point, to convince men that the blessed Jesus, who died for their sins, did indeed rise again, and now sits in power and glory at the right hand of the Majesty on high; that he is Lord over all, and able to save all who come to the Father by him. Without this belief Christianity is a vain delusion: for if Christ be not risen from the dead, and exalted to glory, *then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.* But if he be risen from the dead, if he now reigns in power at the right hand of the Almighty, if he received this power, and if he uses it in order to our salvation, can any thing be more absurd than to deny him those honours which are due to him, in consequence of his glory, and necessarily flow from the relation we stand in towards him? The danger which some apprehend in paying this duty to their Redeemer, of robbing God of his peculiar honour, and set-

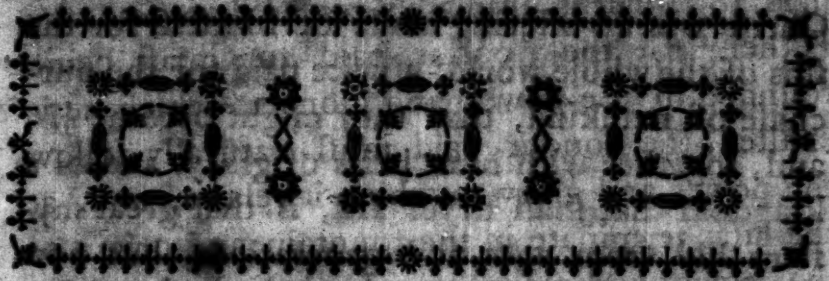
ting up a new and distinct object of worship, in opposition to those plain commands which confine our religious service to God alone, will vanish away, if we consider, in the last place,

That all powers exercised by Christ, all honours paid to him, are ultimately referred to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The honour and worship paid to the Son must either be part of the service we owe to God, or it must be inconsistent with it. If we have found out a new object of adoration for ourselves, we are offenders against the law, which says, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*: but if we honour Christ in consequence of the power and glory conferred on him by God, and in virtue of a command received from God, to honour the Son even as we honour the Father, then the honour we pay to Christ is part of the service we owe to God, and arises even out of that command, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*.

Our Saviour has told us, *that all power is given unto him*; in which he asserts both his own and the Father's authority; his own, as being invested with all power; his Father's, as being the author and fountain of all the power claimed and exercised by the Son. He has told us by his apostle, that at the consummation of all things the Son shall resign his power, *that God may be all in all*; a sufficient declaration that the power now exercised by him is the Father's power, which, as it is at last to be given up to him, so was it at first received from him.

From hence it is manifest, that the honour paid to Christ is ultimately referred to God the Father; for the honour paid to Christ being founded in the power and glory to which he is exalted, the honour paid must naturally follow the power and glory to which it relates, and, at the last, terminate in the fountain and origin of that power and glory, even God the Father. By this means the peculiar honour of God the Father is secured whilst we worship and adore the Son. If we adore the Son, it is because of the relation to the Father: if we honour our Redeemer, that honour must redound to his glory, who was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself: if we apply it to Christ as our High-priest, at the same time we acknowledge his glory who anointed him to this office: if we worship him who is Head of the church, we cannot but adore him who gave Christ to be the Head of the church: if we fall down before him who has all power and might, at the same time do we confess the excellency of the Father, who hath given him all power, and put all things in subjection under him. So that we cannot honour the Son as we ought to do, but we must at the same time honour the Father with the honour due to him. And this sufficiently shews, that the gospel has not strained the precepts of natural religion in teaching us to honour the Son, whom the Father hath exalted to the right hand of his Majesty on high, and given to be the Head over all principalities and powers, even to the consummation of all things.



DISCOURSE II.

TITUS ii. 14.

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

THE expression here made use of, *Who gave himself for us*, is so familiar to the ears of Christians, and is so well understood to relate to the death of Christ, and the offering up of himself upon the cross for the sins of the whole world, that there is no need to give light into it by alledging parallel places of holy scripture. The expression is something fuller in St Paul's first epistle to Timothy, *Who gave himself a ransom for all*, chap. ii. 6. ; as likewise, Gal. i. 4. *Who gave himself for our sins* : but the import and meaning of the words is one and the same.

This doctrine of the gospel, that the death of Christ was an offering made of himself for the sins of the whole world, a price paid for the purchase of mankind, that they might become *his*, and, together with him, heirs of glory, and of a kingdom that shall never fail, is that great mystery hid from ages and generations, but now made manifest by the preaching of the apostles and prophets of Christ Jesus.

But, that we may not mistake, and imagine that, because this mystery is said to be *made known* and *manifest* to us, therefore we are entitled to call for the reasons upon which this wonderful administration of Providence is founded, it is necessary to observe, that the gospel is a revelation of the will and purpose of God. The reasons upon which he acted, when he ordained this method of salvation, are not fully revealed to us, nor have we authority to say they ever will be. Under the law we meet with many intimations of God's purpose to save mankind: under the gospel this purpose is opened and proclaimed to all the world: but neither under the law, nor yet under the gospel, are we instructed in the reason of this proceeding; but having life and immortality set before us in God's own way, we are left to embrace them through faith, and confidence in his promise, who is able to perform the word which is gone out of his mouth.

And, since God has thought fit to offer the gospel as a matter of faith to the world, and has given his word, confirmed by signs and wonders, as a sufficient security for the performance on

his part, he acts without commission who proposes the gospel to the world as a matter of science and knowledge, and the result of mere reason, and pretends to account for the methods of God's wisdom, which are far above and out of his sight.

If you ask how it became necessary for Christ to die, or why God required a sacrifice for those sins which he might, if he had so pleased, have freely forgiven? I know but one proper answer for a minister of the gospel to make to these enquiries, That God has not admitted him into these secret councils, nor sent him to declare them to the world.

We preach the death of Christ a sacrifice and expiation for sin, because appointed by God, who gave his Son to die for the sins of the world: we preach Christ the resurrection and the life, because God hath given him power to raise the dead: we preach Christ the judge of the world, because the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son. If you ask for our evidence, we answer with St Peter, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins," Acts x. 43.: we answer with our blessed Saviour, "The works which he did in his Father's name, they bear witness of him," John x. 25.: we answer with St Paul, "That God hath given this assurance unto all men, that he will judge the world by Christ, in that he raised Jesus from the dead," Acts xvii. 31.

Upon this evidence the faith of the gospel stands: the Christian's hope of salvation has no dependence upon the speculations of curious enquirers, but rests upon this immoveable foundation, *That all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and amen;* that is, sure, certain, and irrevocable promises.

The death of Christ was, as the holy scripture teaches, foreordained before the foundation of the world; and since God intended, in the fullness of time, to offer salvation to the world through faith in the sacrifice of his Son, it is reasonable to suppose, that the sacrifices before and under the law, were introduced and countenanced to prepare the faith of the world to receive the tender of God's mercies, in virtue of the one sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the whole world, that, being accustomed to ask pardon for iniquities by the means of sacrifice, men might be ready and disposed to receive the grace of God, when offered under like conditions.

Sacrifices in the heathen world, as all other parts of religion, were corrupted, and applied to corrupt purposes; but they appear at first in the religious worship of the best and most approved men in the earliest time, and were established as part of God's worship in the church of his own founding, among the people of Israel. Had this been a mere piece of superstition and human invention in its original, however we may suppose God to accept graciously the free-will offering of a weak mind, yet it is not to be supposed that he would adopt the superstition, and make it a

necessary part of a religion of his own establishment. To avoid this absurd consequence, it must be maintained, that the use of sacrifice was introduced by divine precept for the atonement of sins. If sacrifices were introduced by the command of God, they had such virtue as he thought fit to annex to the performance, in consequence of the promise which attended them; but if they came in any other way, it is impossible to conceive that there was any virtue in them. And since we are taught that the sacrifice offered up by Christ is the only true expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world, it is manifest that all other sacrifices accepted by God owed their efficacy to the relation they bore to this one sacrifice, through the appointment of him who gave them for signs and figures of better things to come.

This reasoning upon the principles of revelation taught us in the gospel may shew us, that the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is not confined to any particular age or time; that sacrifices in the ancient church of God were figures and representations of this one great sacrifice, as the eucharist in the Christian church is the memorial of it; and that the most material and significative part of worship among the people of God has ever been *the shewing forth the Lord's death*, in types and figures before the coming of Christ, and in the communion of his body ever since.

This sacrifice conveys to us the charter of God's pardon, and, together with it, the certain hope of glory and immortality. We are now

no longer our own, that we should obey the lusts of the flesh, but we are his who hath purchased us with the inestimable price of his own blood; purchased us, not to be slaves, but to be his brethren, and heirs with him of the kingdom of God.

These are great hopes; and are built upon our faith in the promises of God through Christ Jesus. How reasonable this foundation is, a little consideration will shew. All religion ultimately resolves itself into trust and faith in God. Men are not apt to refer those conclusions to the head of faith, which they collect from their own natural reason, and yet, oftentimes, these conclusions have no other support. In common affairs of life, where we have long known men to act upon principles of honour and virtue, we think ourselves as secure in our dealings with them as if we pursued them in every step with bonds and obligations. This is, without doubt, trust and confidence; and yet it is a natural conclusion of our reasoning upon the characters and qualities of men about us. This is the very argument upon which natural religion forms all its conclusions: it reasons from the character and attributes of God, and rests itself in this conclusion, That so just and reasonable a Being will deal justly and reasonably with the children of men; and what is this but faith and trust in God? To any higher point of certainty natural religion cannot arrive: for though we may certainly conclude, from the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God, that he will, in all his dealings, act

wisely, mercifully, and justly, yet we cannot draw this general conclusion into particulars, and say precisely what is the very thing which God will do in any case, or by what particular method he will bring it about. To determine this we must be as wise as God; for no being not infinitely wise can, with certainty, say what is the best thing for infinite Wisdom to do: for though we learn from natural religion to depend on God for future happiness, if we do well, yet Nature presents us with great difficulties: we die, and moulder to dust, and in that state what we are, or where we are, Nature cannot say: whether we are beings capable of enjoyment out of the body; whether we are to have the same, or other, or any bodies; what kind of happiness is prepared for us; what capacities and powers we shall be endued with, and the like, are enquiries in which we can have no light from mere reason. What does natural religion do then under these difficulties? Why, it supports itself upon this one rational conclusion, That God has power and wisdom to conduct this great affair in the best method; and to him it may be securely left. And is not this a religion of faith, which trusts God for all its dearest concerns?

This faith of natural religion is the basis and foundation of gospel faith: for as reason teaches us to depend upon the attributes of God's wisdom, justice, and goodness, it teaches us also to depend on his veracity; and therefore, upon God's declaring the method in which he will save the world, it is altogether as rational an act of

faith to rely upon the method which he has declared, as it is in natural religion to rely upon his goodness to do the thing, without being able to assign any method in which it shall be done: for if it be reasonable in natural religion to rely upon God's goodness for the pardon of sin, is it not as reasonable under the gospel to rely upon pardon through Jesus Christ, God having declared himself reconciled to the world through Jesus Christ? The difference lyes not in the nature of faith in one case and in the other, but in the extent of our knowledge in one case and in the other. Under natural religion we see only this, that God is merciful; and therefore our trust and faith can go no farther than this, to rely on his mercy: under the gospel God has declared, that he has given his only Son to die for the sins of the world, and therefore we believe, that through the death of Christ we shall receive pardon and redemption. In natural religion, the general belief that God will save us, implies that some means shall be used for our salvation; under the gospel the means are ascertained, and therefore the faith of a Christian embraces the means as well as the end of this hope.

In things which are within our power to do, or to conceive, we can judge of the fitness or unfitness of the means made use of to do them, but in things which exceed our power and our conceptions we have not this judgment. We judge the earth to be a proper place to receive the seeds of vegetables; the seed of animals have their

proper repositories also: but we judge of the propriety in these cases from experience only; we think them proper, because we see they are, for we have no notion of the propriety of these means, or any clear conception of the operations of nature in one case or the other: and could these methods be proposed to one quite a stranger to the works of nature, and should he be told, that the way to make ten bushels out of one was to throw the one into the ground, and there let it ly and rot, very probably he would think the proposal exceedingly absurd. Now, to give life to one dead, or to conceive how it is to be given, is the remotest thing that can be from our powers and capacities. Let the proper means therefore be what they will, they must be above our comprehension. In this article natural religion throws itself upon the unlimited power of God, which is owning itself no judge of the means for effecting this great work. The gospel has opened to us the purposes of God for effecting this work. We complain that we do not see the natural tendency of these means to the end proposed, not considering that the work itself is mysterious; and therefore the proper means to effect it must be so too.

That the death of Christ should be the life of the world is a surprising proposition; and yet to say this is not a proper method for redeeming the world, without having a clear view of the whole dispensation of Providence with respect to mankind, is utterly absurd.

The scriptures of the New Testament have discovered to us, that we are the immediate workmanship of the Son of God, "by whom all things were made which were made; being created by him, and for him." How far this relation between Christ and the children of men made it proper for him to offer, and for God to accept the sacrifice of his death, as an expiation for the sins of the world, we are not directly informed; nor is it expedient for us to be wise above what is written: but something of this sort seems to be intimated in scripture. The fall of man was the loss of so many subjects to the Christ, their natural Lord under God, in virtue of his having created them; the redeeming them was the recovering of them again, the re-establishing his power over his own works. See how St Paul describes this work of our redemption: "God hath delivered us from the powers of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," Col. i. 13. In the next verse he recites the means made use of for our deliverance: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." For the confirmation and establishment of this doctrine of the gospel, he immediately subjoins the relation in which Christ stands towards us as our Maker, and the new relation acquired in virtue of his redemption. In the first view he styles him, *The image of the invisible God, the First-born of every creature; for by him were all things created—and by him all things consist.* In the second view he calls him, *The Head of the body, the*

church, who is the Beginning, the First-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. As we owed to him our first life, so we owe to him our second: the reason of this dispensation of Providence in the redemption of mankind is added by the apostle: "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and (having made peace by the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things to himself." The scheme of thought which runs through this passage of scripture seems to be this, That as Christ was Head of the creation, and made all things, so when God thought fit to restore the world from sin, it pleased him that Christ should be Head also of this new work, the First-born from the dead himself, and the giver of life to every believer: for this purpose he made peace by the blood of his cross, and reconciled all things to God, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. Thus much we collect from the apostle's reasoning, and discern plainly, that the pre-eminence of Christ, as Head of the church, is connected and related to his pre-eminence as Head of the creation. Therefore we have reason to believe, that the whole transaction of our redemption through Christ, his incarnation, his life on earth, his death on the cross, the sacrifice he offered for sin, and his glorious resurrection, are founded in the most absolute propriety, and are the result of infinite Wisdom, chusing the fittest means to accomplish this great work.

To go back then from whence we set out. This is our hope and confidence, that Christ gave himself for us. Let this hope live with us here, that we may live by it for ever; let it ever mortify our corrupt affections on earth, and teach us to live only to him who died for us; for we live to the world, and all the lusts of it, dead, and our life is hid with Christ; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."

through this passage of scripture seems to be this. That as Christ was Head of the creation, and made all things, so when God thought fit to restore the world from sin, it pleased him that Christ should be Head also of this new work, First-born from the dead himself, and the giver of life to every believer: for this purpose he made peace by the blood of his cross, and reconciled all things to God, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. Thus much we collect from the apostle's reasoning, and discern plainly, that the pre-eminence of Christ, as Head of the church, is connected and related to his pre-eminence as Head of the creation. Therefore we have reason to believe, that the whole transaction of our redemption through Christ, his incarnation, his life on earth, his death on the cross, the sacrifice he offered for sin, and his glorious resurrection, are founded in the most absolute propriety, and are the result of infinite Wisdom, choosing the fittest means to accomplish this great work.

DISCOURSE III.

I TIMOTHY I. 15.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

THESSE words contain the great charter of the Christian church, and are the title by which we claim all the benefits and promises of the gospel. If you enquire upon what pretence we proclaim the peace of God to mankind, upon what confidence we offer pardon to sinners, who, according to the terms of natural justice, are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, we answer, in the words of the text, *That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*; and that in his name we preach salvation, and peace, and pardon to offenders.

This is the doctrine which, together with the principles on which it is founded, and the con-

sequences naturally flowing from it, distinguishes the Christian religion from all other religions whatever. The hopes peculiar to believers are built upon this great article, and whatever advantages and favours we pretend to under the gospel, more than can be claimed upon the terms of justice and natural religion, are to be ascribed to this only, *That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*

Whoever therefore rejects this article, he does indeed reject the Christian religion; I mean not that such an one must necessarily reject all the religion contained in the books of the gospel; for the moral duties of the gospel are the very duties of natural religion, improved and carried into perfection; and the man who receives not Christ for his Saviour and Redeemer, may yet receive the doctrines of morality, as taught and explained by him, because he finds them agreeable to the light of his own reason and understanding.

The difference then between a true deist and the Christian arises from the doctrine contained in the text. They both equally believe the being and providence of God, and the obligations of morality are equally admitted on both sides. The necessity of a virtuous life, in obedience to these obligations, is no matter of dispute, at least there is no reason why it should be matter of dispute between them. The deist has no room to doubt in this case; for he has no other hope than in his obedience, which of necessity therefore must be so perfect, as to render him accept-

able in the sight of his equitable Judge: and if the Christian builds so far on other hopes as to neglect the weighty matters of the law, he deceives himself, and abuses the gospel of his Saviour.

But then in other respects they differ widely: the deist reckons himself and the rest of mankind to be in that state of nature in which God created them, and therefore capable of obtaining by the present powers of nature the end designed by God for man: In consequence of this, as he owns the duty of obeying God, so, in right of his obedience, he claims his favour and protection. The Christian is persuaded, that man has fallen from the state of innocence in which he was created; that, being a sinner, he has no claim upon God by his obedience, but stands in need of pardon; and that, being now weak through sin, he stands in need of grace and assistance to enable him to perform the conditions on which the pardon of God is offered: and he believes that God has indeed pardoned mankind, and granted them reconciliation, being thereunto moved by the obedience and sufferings of his Son Jesus Christ; and that he hath promised, and will surely give his grace and assistance to all true believers in Christ, to enable them to perform the conditions of his pardon.

What the Christian thus believes, the gospel plainly teaches: and these are the great points to be made good; and they are briefly comprehended in the words of the text, *That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.*

To illustrate and confirm this proposition, it will be proper to shew,

First, What reason we have to believe that men were sinners, and stood in need of pardon and salvation.

Secondly, By what means Christ perfected their redemption and salvation.

The first question is, What reason have we to believe that men were sinners, and stood in need of pardon?

It is a saying of St. Austin's, *Si non perisset homo, non venisset Christus*; If man had not fallen, Christ had not come: and our Lord speaks to the same sense, when he tells us, *The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*: and his answer to those who reproached him with conversing with publicans and sinners stands upon the same ground, *They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*. Had man continued in innocence, the religion of nature would have answered all the ends of his creation: he wanted no Redeemer in his natural state; for it would be absurd to suppose that Christ came to redeem man from the state and condition in which God made him. After the works of creation were finished God liked them all, and *saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good*. In this state, therefore, nothing was wanting to the perfection of the creature; God was pleased with all his works, and with man especially, to whom he gave dominion over the rest of the world. In this state, therefore, there was no want of a reconciler be;

tween God and man, nor would there ever have been any such want, had this happy state continued.

That innocence and virtue shall be rewarded, guilt and iniquity punished, is no more than what natural sense and reason have always taught the considering part of mankind: for the voice of reason and of the law are in this respect the same, *This do, and thou shalt live.* And though man is altered and changed, yet the nature of things is still the same; and he is no ill reasoner who, from the abstracted consideration of virtue and vice, concludes, that virtue has a just title to reward, and vice deserves punishment: and it is no wonder that they who argue upon these general views only, should imagine, that moral virtue may still exalt a man to all the degrees of happiness that his nature is capable of.

In the celebrated question concerning the merit of good works there has arose much confusion, for want of distinguishing between good works, simply and in their own nature considered, and considered as done or performed by the sons of men. The first is a single question, Whether virtue in its own nature has a title to reward? And who will deny it? For as sure as God is just, as sure as there is a difference between good and evil, he will, he must reward the one, and punish the other. But when you ask, Whether the good works of men deserve and merit reward? you strangely alter the state of the question; for here not only the nature of good works, but the nature and condition of

man must be considered too. If he has already concluded himself, if sentence is gone out against him, and his case be irretrievable, your question must be impertinent, because you ask, whether he, who is already under condemnation for his evil works, may be rewarded for his good works?

Put the case, that a man ten years ago committed a secret and barbarous murder; that since he has lived in an unblameable submission and obedience to the government; ask then the question, Whether obedience and submission to the government have a right and title to protection and defence in life and fortune? Every man will answer, Yes. But ask again, Whether this man's obedience and submission have the same right and title? Every man will answer, No: because the villainy committed long since puts him out of protection of the government, and justice is still indebted to him for the horrid fact; and whenever it meets him will execute upon him wrath and vengeance.

I intend not to press this instance to a parallel with our case: but thus much at least it shews, that virtue and morality may, in their own nature, and in themselves considered, deserve reward from a just and righteous Being; and yet the virtue and morality of man may not deserve it. And this is the parting point between the patrons of natural and revealed religion, the notwithstanding which has made some imagine, that, whilst we defend the authority of revelation, we give up the principles of reason and nature. Is there not, say they, an essential difference between

virtue and vice? True, there is. Is not justice the attribute of God? and must not a just God reward virtue and punish vice? True still. Is not this then, say they, a sufficient foundation for religion, without recurring to grace and faith, or miracles, or mysteries? True, it is, where native innocence is preserved, where religion is *res integra*: but what will you say of those who have already offended? Consult your principles of reason; the voice of Nature is, that vice must be punished: if so, all that offenders, all that sinners can expect from natural religion, is the just reward of their sins and offences: and whether these are such terms and conditions as should endear natural religion to sinners, common sense shall judge.

Were Christianity to be preached to a new race of men, created without spot of sin, or stain of guilt, they might well wonder at the conditions of faith and repentance; at the doctrine of salvation by the righteousness of Christ, and not by their own; and that their happiness should depend not upon their own works, but upon the free grace and promise of God: they might well ask, Why should God make that a matter of free grace and promise, which must be the necessary effect and consequence of his justice? Why may we not be saved by our own righteousness, since righteousness has a natural claim to happiness? What should we repent of who have done no harm? or, What other object have we for faith than the justice of God, which is the foundation upon which religion stands? But should this

new race fall from innocence, and stand liable to the punishments of vice, should you then ask them where their hopes were, they would not answer, I presume, in the justice of God, or argue upon the right that virtue has to a reward; but could they express any hope, it would be in the mercy and forgiveness of God. And whence must this forgiveness come? Is it the gift of God, or is it the reward of sin? If it is the gift of God, then it is free grace; if it be the gift of God, then he alone can tell whether he will give it or no, and you cannot know it unless he declares it: what God declares is a revelation, and all the assurance you can have that he will be as good as his word is, that you believe and depend upon his truth for the performance of what he hath promised. From whence it evidently follows, that the religion of a sinner must be a revealed religion, and the principle of it must be faith.

Some, I know, contend, that it may be proved, from the mercies and goodness of God, that he will forgive sinners. If so, there can be no such thing as natural religion: for it is demonstrable from the justice of God, that he must reward virtue and punish vice; and if it be demonstrable too from his mercy that he must forgive sin, then natural religion includes the greatest contradiction in nature, that sin necessarily must, and necessarily must not, be punished. If you say only, that it is probable that a merciful God will pity the folly and weakness of human kind, and recede from the strictness of justice in his

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dealings with them, so say we too: but probability cannot infer necessity; and if it be not necessary that he should do it, it must then depend upon his will whether he will do it or no; and your hopes and your religion must be resolved, not into the evidence of nature, but into the evidence of free grace; which evidence can be no other than revelation; for the Spirit only searcheth the deep things of God, and the Spirit only can bring them to light.

Would you then disprove revelation, and discard the religion of Christ? For once you must prove mankind to be in a state of innocence and purity, and then it will be senseless to talk of redemption; for what should innocence be redeemed from? You must shew that nature is not vitiated or corrupted; that the flesh does not lust against the mind; but that there is a mutual agreement, and the flesh obeys the mind, and the mind obeys God: then you may at once reject the doctrine of repentance, of free grace, of justification through the blood of Christ. But, whilst you endeavour to prove this, try at least to be an instance of it yourself: let innocence be your outward garment, and purity your inward; let your hands be void of evil: let not your eye glance upon the large possessions of your neighbour, nor so much as one thought wander towards his wife or daughter: let your heart be the fountain of unbounded love and good-will, and the grave of malice and revenge; where all injuries and affronts, all resentments shall ly buried and inactive, and be as though

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they were not: and when you have gained this experimental evidence from yourself of the innocence and goodness of nature, it will then be time enough to set up for a patron of her cause, and to assert her right to Heaven upon the foot of native righteousness: till then, at least, how innocent soever you may suppose others to be, yet for your own sake wish that there may be redemption for sinners; that God may visit the world, not in justice but in mercy.

Innocence may challenge justice, but sin can only sue for pardon. Justice you may have from nature, but pardon you must have from grace and favour. It was an apophthegm of one of the wise men, *Γνῶθι σεαυτόν, Learn to know thyself*: and this is the first thing necessary in order to chuse your religion, rightly to know and understand your own condition. A condemned malefactor must not sue to his prince on the same terms that a faithful and deserving subject may: the one may represent his service and obedience, the other has nothing to plead but his misery: one applies to the justice and generosity of the prince; the other to his pity and compassion. Consider then with yourself, Can you stand a trial with God? Can you plead your services to him, and say, Behold thy servant; do unto him according to his works? If you can, Justice will do you right: but if your heart misgives you; if your conscience cries out to you, Let us not enter into judgment with our God, for in his sight shall no man living be justified, what have you to do but to seek, if haply you may find the mercy of God?

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The Christian religion is, in all its parts, adapted to the present nature and circumstances of mankind, and it is not possible to see the reasonableness and beauty of the gospel without considering the quality and condition of those for whose use and benefit it is designed: and this, I believe, is one great reason why the gospel has been so much undervalued in comparison with natural religion, that the end of it has not been rightly understood. But if we reflect upon the dealings of God with mankind from the beginning, and the behaviour of men towards God, and from thence deduce the state and condition of mankind before the coming of Christ, this will enable us to judge what was wanting towards making mankind happy: and will shew us how proper and reasonable, how perfect and adequate a means the gospel of Christ is.

Secondly, Let us consider by what means Christ has wrought this redemption.

What the scripture tells us of the nature of God, *That he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, i. e. to behold it without being offended at it, is a truth as discernible by the principles of reason as by the authority of revelation. The fact then supposed, which cannot be contested, that the world was in a state of corruption and degeneracy, it is manifest that they were fallen under the displeasure of God, or, in the language of scripture, were become *children of wrath*. To redeem the world, therefore, it was necessary that God should be reconciled to sinners, and

should pardon the offences, which could not be recalled, or which, through infirmity of nature, could not be avoided. To think of a redemption on any other foot would be absolutely absurd; it would be an attempt to rescue sinners from the displeasure and anger of God whether he would or no.

Look now into the gospel, and see how the case stands there. You will find that the only begotten Son of God took our nature upon him, and that by a perfect obedience to the voice of his Father, and a voluntary resignation of himself to the cross, he made and completed this reconciliation, and proclaimed the pardon of God to the lost sons of Adam. And in this properly consists the work of redemption.

But to redeem men from the displeasure of God, and leave them in a condition to draw it upon themselves afresh every day, would have been an useless undertaking, and unworthy of his dignity who was employed in it. To secure therefore the benefit of the redemption which he had purchased with his blood to mankind, it was necessary to restore them to such a state as might render them fit objects for God to take pleasure in. This too he did by the powerful methods prescribed in the gospel, for rectifying the corrupt and depraved wills of men, by the many revelations relating to his own spiritual kingdom, given to clear and enlighten their understanding in things belonging to their salvation, the knowledge of which had been lost, or so

darkened and obscured by the fall, as to be of no efficacy in reforming the world. And to render these means effectual to the purposes of salvation, he promised and bestowed the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to enable men to receive and to lay hold of eternal life.

This is a short account of what Christ has done to save sinners. He has reconciled God to you; have you any reason to be offended? He has procured your pardon; has he injured you by so doing? If not, what is it any man has to complain of? It is true, you will say, so far you have no reason to complain; you are willing to be pardoned, but you cannot see that the death of Christ was a proper means to reconcile God to sinners. But do you consider who you are, when you make this objection? You are the sinner, the person to be pardoned: does it belong to you, or to your offended Master, to judge what are the proper means of reconciliation? If to him only, (and surely that is the case), why do you debate a point in which you have no interest nor concern, farther than to accept the blessing, upon whatever motives it was granted? God has assured you of his pardon, and given his word, confirmed by signs and wonders, and by raising him to life who died for you. If you believe him, you may rest secure that he has not made use of improper means to effect his gracious purposes to men.

If the wisdom of God has ordained means for the salvation of man, of which we cannot fully

comprehend the reason, I know but one just consequence that can be deduced from it, That the counsels of God are too deep to be fathomed by the short line of human reason. And surely this can be no news, no surprise to a considering man, who sees every day the same truth confirmed in an hundred instances. That you live and have a being in this world is out of doubt; but tell me how, shew the spring of life, the principle of motion and activity within you; and when you do, I may venture to undertake to explain to you the means by which you shall be brought to life hereafter. But let us leave all these curious enquiries, and be content that God should be wiser than man, especially considering, that though he has concealed from us the secrets of his wisdom, yet he has fully exposed to our view his love to mankind: his mercy shines out in the fullest lustre in every page of the gospel, and there is no cloud to obscure it.

The advantages procured for us, and the discoveries made to us by the gospel of Christ, do so correspond to the sentiments of nature within us, that it is wonderful to find the pretensions of nature set in opposition to the Christian revelation. The moral duties of the gospel are but the dictates of reason and nature carried into their just conclusions: the promises of the gospel contain the very hopes of nature confirmed and made sure to us. If the gospel has promised pardon to sinners, it is but what Nature teaches

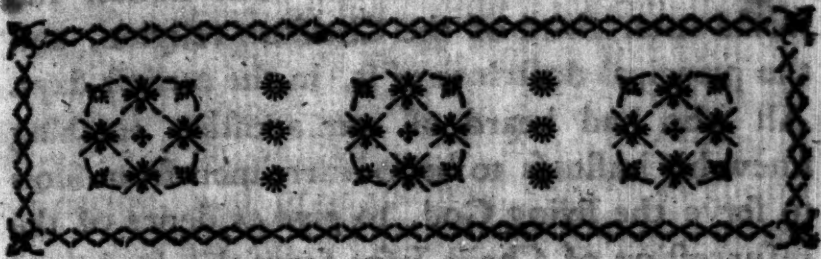
all her children to seek for: and if Nature teaches you to hope for mercy, is your case become the worse because God through Christ has promised it? Natural conscience tells us we are accountable to him who made us; is it not the same declaration made in the gospel, "That God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world?" Is not Nature ever looking out, and with unutterable groans panting after life for evermore? has she any reason then to fly from him who hath "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel?"

Go then, and learn of Nature to value these great gifts: attend to her silent voice within you; it will speak in the language of the apostle, and tell you, *This saying is worthy of all acceptance, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*

"I have appointed a day in which he will judge
 the world: I will not leave ever looking out
 for the day of his coming, without seeing after his
 work."

I have been thinking of you much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you. I have been thinking of you much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you.

In the words before the text, "In the word of the Lord," the Theologians, that not only the word of the Lord had founded our faith, but also the word of the Lord had founded our faith, but the word of the Lord was spread abroad in the world, so that there is no occasion, adds the words, "and of his word." In the word of the Lord, the word of the Lord was spread abroad in the world, so that there is no occasion, adds the words, "and of his word."



DISCOURSE IV.



I THESSALONIANS i. 9, 10.

For they themselves shew of us, what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

IN the verse before the text the apostle tells the Thessalonians, that not only the word of the Lord had sounded out from them in Macedonia and Achaia, but their faith also towards God was spread abroad in every place; so that there is no occasion, adds the apostle, for me to say any thing of the doctrines delivered by me, and received by you; the thing is well known, and notorious to all the world: *They themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you.*

It is evident from hence what notion the world entertained of the Christian religion, and the principal doctrines of it, in the earliest days. All who had heard of our apostle's teaching knew his business to be to turn men from idols to serve the living God, to give evidence of the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead, and to establish a certain expectation of his coming again with power and glory to judge the world. This common report St Paul allows to be so just and adequate an account of his doctrine, as to leave no room to enlarge or correct it: *In every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.*

If we consider this early account of the Christian religion, so universally received, and so well approved by the apostle, we shall find it to consist of two principal parts: The first relating to the service owing to the living God; the second to our faith in Christ, and our hope and expectation grounded on that faith.

Religion, considered under the notion of a service we owe to God, can be no other than natural religion, or true uncorrupted deism. This was the old original religion of mankind, but had been so corrupted and abused, that there was hardly any sign of it left when our Saviour appeared in the world. However rightly some few might think, yet they found themselves obliged to follow the world, and practise with the vulgar. Not many attempted, and none succeeded in a reformation of the public religion. No antiquity affords an instance of any people,

great or small, who served God upon the principles of natural religion. The only general and effectual reformation of the world was brought about by the preaching of the gospel, which revived and introduced the true ancient religion of nature, and prepared men for the reception of it, and has, by the additional supports of revelation, maintained it for many ages, and probably will maintain it to the end and consummation of all things.

These additional supports make the second great branch of Christian doctrine: they are revived upon the authority of revelation, and stand upon the evidence of external proofs. That we ought to turn from idols, and serve the living God; that we ought to serve him in holiness and purity, in conforming ourselves to the example of his justice, equity, and goodness, are truths which every man may feel to be such, who has any reason or natural feeling about him: but that we have been delivered from the wrath to come by Jesus the Son of God; that God raised him from the dead, and hath appointed him to be Judge both of the dead and of the living, are articles which no man's reason can suggest; which, when suggested, reason cannot receive upon any internal evidence, but must take them upon an authority sufficiently confirmed, and established upon external evidence.

This distinction, constantly attended to, will go a great way in shewing us the true temper and genius of the Christian religion, and the end proposed by its divine Author. Consider the go-

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spel in its precepts and morality; and is there any doctrine advanced, any duty required, but what Reason must admit and approve, or which it can reject without doing violence to itself? Is there in this respect any objection against the Christian religion, but what is and must be equally an objection against all natural religion? Consider the gospel with respect to its new doctrines, its articles of belief; you will find them all designed to support and encourage true religion, and to preserve the world from falling again into that confusion of idolatry and superstition which for many ages held it in darkness. This might be shewn in the several particulars of the gospel-dispensation; but I shall confine myself to those specified in the text.

St Paul teaches us "to wait for the Son of God from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

To wait for the Son of God from heaven, signifies to continue with patience and well-doing, in expectation of the coming of our Saviour and Judge; which sense is completely expressed, Philip. iii. 17, 20, 21. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample. — For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

The expectation of Christ coming to judge the world is peculiar to Christians; and it is supported by the belief of the resurrection of Christ, that great and main point of faith, which the apostles were commissioned to teach and establish in the church of God; for which reason, when an apostle was to be chosen in the room of Judas, the qualification required in the person to succeed was, that he should be one capable of bearing testimony of the resurrection of Christ. Take the account in St Peter's own words: "Of these
 " men which have companied with us, all the
 " time that the Lord Jesus went in and out
 " among us, Beginning from the baptism of
 " John, unto that same day that he was taken up
 " from us, must one be ordained to be a witness
 " with us of his resurrection," Acts i. 21, 22. And in the next chapter St Peter, vindicating to the Jews the miraculous gift of tongues bestowed on the day of Pentecost, renders this account of the work and ministry of the apostleship:
 " Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of
 " Nazareth, a man approved of God among you,
 " by miracles and wonders, and signs, which
 " God did by him in the midst of you—Him,
 " being delivered by the determinate counsel and
 " foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and
 " by wicked hands ye have crucified and slain,"
 v. 22, 23. " This Jesus hath God raised up,
 " whereof we all are witnesses," v. 32. To the same purpose again in the third chapter, " Ye
 " denied the holy One and the Just, and desired
 " a murderer to be granted unto you; And

"killed the Prince of life, whom God hath
"raised from the dead; whereof we are wit-
"nesses," v. 14, 15. In the fourth chapter an
account is given of the courage and boldness of
the apostles in preaching Christ to the rulers,
and of the success of their ministry among the
people: the sum of it we have in these words:
"With great power gave the apostles witness of
"the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great
"grace was upon them all," v. 33. In the fifth
chapter the apostles are called again before the
council: the high-priest charges them with dis-
obeying the injunctions given them not to preach
in Christ's name: St Peter and the rest answer
him and the council, by opening to them the
commission and authority by which they acted,
and the doctrine which they taught: "We
"ought," say they, "to obey God rather than
"man. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus,
"whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree: Him
"hath God exalted with his right hand to be a
"Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance
"to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we
"are his witnesses of these things; and so is also
"the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to
"them that obey him," v. 29, 30, 31, 32. From
these passages of scripture, taken together, it
plainly appears how much the Christian religion,
considered as a distinct system from natural re-
ligion, depends upon the belief of the resurrec-
tion of Christ. The apostles were ordained to
be witnesses of this article: this article is the
foundation upon which they build all the hopes

and expectations peculiar to Christians: if they preach repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins, it is in his name whom God raised from the dead: if they turn to the Gentiles with offers of peace and reconciliation, it is still in his name whom God raised from the dead, and ordained to be the Judge of quick and dead.

When St Paul preached at Athens, they thought him an introducer of some new deities, he talked so much of *Jesus and the resurrection*, Acts xvii. 18. Which doctrine of a resurrection he afterwards fully expounded to them, together with the consequents belonging to it: "Now," says the apostle, "God commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead," v. 30, 31. This passage of St Paul gives a very plain account of the concern to propagate and establish the article of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection of Christ was designed to be an evidence and assurance to the world of God's intention to judge the world in righteousness. This new article was introduced to be a new evidence of a future state of rewards and punishments, and to support the sinner's hopes of pardon and reconciliation thro' the promises of Christ, whom God had appointed to be his Judge.

You see then the use of this great article of Christian faith. Let us consider now whether we are beholden to the gospel, and how much,

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for this new evidence of a life to come; and what there is in this article, and the doctrines grounded upon it, that any sober deist, or professor of natural religion, can justly blame.

Natural religion pretends to support itself upon the expectation of future rewards and punishments: it considers God as governor and judge of the world. Christian religion stands upon the same foundation, and admits for genuine all these hopes and fears of nature. Thus far there is no difference. The question is, which brings the best proof, and most fitted to persuade the world of this great truth? Natural religion appeals to conscience, and that sense which all men have of their being accountable for their actions. The Christian religion embraces all this evidence, and whatever else can be suggested by Reason to render the hopes of futurity probable, or certain: to these evidences it adds the express testimony and assurance of God given to mankind in the resurrection of his beloved Son Jesus Christ.

But what need, you will say, of this new evidence? Were not the arguments which natural religion affords sufficient to support the belief and expectation of a future judgment? If so, to what purpose is it to call men from a dependence on their reason, to rely on the evidence of men for the truth of a fact so uncommon, and in the nature of it so surprising, as not easily to gain admittance to our belief? a fact, which had we seen ourselves, we might perhaps have suspected the report of our own senses, and cannot there-

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fore easily refer ourselves to the senses of others, in a matter of so great moment and consequence?

Whoever, in answer to this difficulty, endeavours to weaken and enervate the natural arguments for a future state, is, I think, very ill employed: to me they appear so convincing, that I cannot, so amiable, that I would not lessen your opinion of them. But then it is certain that they require more thought and speculation to place them before the mind in their true and strongest light than the generality of men are capable of exercising. And whether this be so or no, is a matter fitter to be determined by the evidence of history than by reasoning upon the case. We are very ill judges, under the light we now enjoy, how far the generality of men could go by the mere strength of reason, without the assistances we have. A right notion of God is the foundation of all true religion; and who is there that thinks himself obliged to any thing but his own reason for this notion? and yet, if this be the case, the world is mightily improved in reason these last ages: for we certainly know many ages past, when the true notion of God was hardly to be found in any nation, commonly to be found in none. Since the publication of the gospel the darkness has been dispelled, and Reason sees and approves the truths which were before in great measure hid from her eyes. The case is the same with respect to the natural arguments for a future state: the arguments duly proposed and considered are of great weight, but yet it is evident they had little weight in the world for many ages

together. The natural notion was so buried under superstitious fables and absurd representations, that it yielded no comfort or satisfaction; was so liable to be exposed and ridiculed for the extravagant representations which attended it, that it afforded no certainty, or even probability, to support the hopes of virtue. The vulgar had no ability to reason much on the case, and the learned who did were full of doubts and uncertainties, and found no sure ground to stand on. To remedy this evil God has proposed a new evidence to the world: he called his Son from the grave, and shewed him before chosen witnesses for many days, who were sent into the world to publish his resurrection, as an evidence of a future general resurrection of all men, and to seal the truth of their doctrine with their own blood.

Now, as to this evidence, it is in the nature of it the properest for the generality of men: it requires no abstracted reasoning, no refinements to shew the force of it; nay, were the wisest man to chuse an evidence for himself of the certainty of a resurrection, I know not what he could desire more than to see one rise from the dead.

As to those who pretend to be real and true deists, I cannot see what there is in this evidence to offend them: the main thing we prove by it they acknowledge to be true, that God will judge the world. Since then the Christian religion has no private design to serve by this evidence, but produces it in confirmation of that general sense of nature which all true religion does admit, why should it be suspected of deceit?

Besides, the belief of a future state, supported by the evidence of the resurrection of Christ, is applied to no other purposes in the Christian religion than every wise and good man would desire it should be applied to, were it a matter to be submitted to his choice. Let us see : The gospel labours to assure us of the certainty of our resurrection to eternal life ; and, not content with the common evidence of reason for a future state, has given us a new proof from the very hand and immediate power of God : there is such a concern shewed in the gospel for fixing and establishing this proof, that we may be sure this proof was provided for the sake of carrying on the great end and design of the gospel, whatever it is ; so that if there is any thing amiss, any delusion or deceit in the gospel, we may certainly find it leaning upon this article of the resurrection for its support. But now, what does the gospel require of us in virtue of our belief of this article ? why, nothing but what reason and natural religion require of us, to live soberly and righteously, in obedience to God, and in love with our brethren. Where is there any ground now for suspicion in the case ? Men do not use to play tricks, or endeavour to impose upon the world for nothing : shew us then any one use made of this article in the gospel, but what all sober-minded men will allow to be a just and proper use, and we will part with our evidence ; but if no such thing can be shewed, never suspect any guile or deceit in the evidence calculated to serve and promote such noble and worthy purposes.

One thing there is in the scripture account of a future state that is new, the designation of the Man Christ Jesus for judge of the quick and the dead ; but this is such a new thing as is liable to no objections on the part of natural religion : for it is no part of natural religion to maintain that God must do every thing immediately by himself, and in his own person, without using the agency or ministry of other beings. This designation of Christ to be judge of the world is no impeachment of the authority of God ; the Son acts by the Father's commission, who hath given all judgment to him : it makes no change in the nature of the judgment ; we shall answer for nothing to Christ but what our reason tells us we are accountable for : so that take in all the circumstances belonging to this article of Christian faith, and yet there is nothing for you to do, nothing for you to expect, but what you are already persuaded you ought to do and expect, if you are in truth so honest and sincere a professor of natural religion as to believe in God, and that he will judge the world in truth and justice. This difference there is between you and a Christian believer ; you have such hopes of futurity as reason and reflection can furnish out ; the Christian has the same hopes, and in the same degree, but has moreover the express promise and testimony of God, confirmed by the resurrection of his only Son, to strengthen his expectations of immortality. Suppose the Christian mistaken, even then he stands upon the same ground that you do ; suppose his faith to be well established,

He stands upon much better, and is able to render to himself a better account of the hope that is in him. This is the advantage we draw from this great article of faith; an article introduced to serve true religion, founded upon an evidence of such force, that it can make its way to every understanding, and wants no help from philosophy to support it.

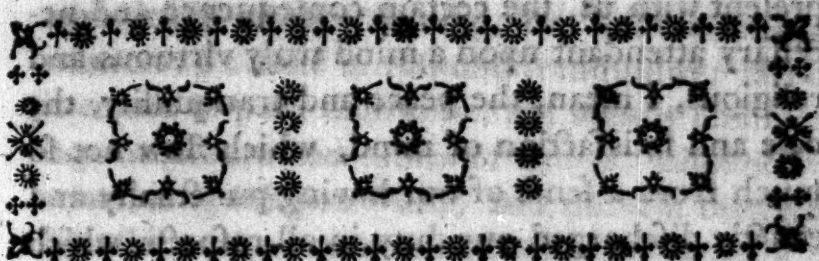
Thus you see how the gospel has supplied the defect of natural religion in this momentous point: how wisely this provision of the gospel was made let experience bear witness. Wherever the gospel prevails, the hopes of immortality are clear and distinct. The preaching the resurrection of Christ conveys to the lowest member of the church of Christ a clear conception of his own future condition.

The resurrection itself was indeed a great and stupendous work, but the hand that performed it was greater. No one, who believes that God made all men at first, can possibly doubt of his power to raise them again from the grave. Allow, you will say, to the power of God all that can be desired, yet still the resurrection remains to be proved, as to the fact; and proved it is by the concurrent testimony of eye-witnesses, who have given not only their words, but their very lives, in confirmation of this truth: and surely they were in very good earnest when they embraced and taught the doctrine upon such hard terms. And methinks no serious man should be very hard of belief in this case. Did the article of the resurrection make any alteration in our notions

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of God, or of religion; did it bring any new burden upon us of any sort, it would be no wonder to see men very careful how they admitted it: but now that it requires nothing at our hands but what Reason and Nature require, is attended with no burden or expence to us, pretends only to establish and confirm the hopes of Nature, what pretence for being so very scrupulous? Admit the article, your hopes are much improved, your duty nothing increased;—reject the article, your duty is the same, and your hopes much less.

How kind a provision has the gospel made for our weakness! how powerfully has it supported the interest of true religion, by furnishing the world with so plain, and yet so strong a proof of a future state, and a judgment to be executed in righteousness, by the Man Christ Jesus, whom God raised from the dead, and hath ordained to be the judge of all the world! Let us hold fast this hope; let this hope be our constant encouragement in doing the work of the Lord; let us do his work chearfully and heartily, knowing for certain that *our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*



DISCOURSE V.



PROVERBS ix. 10.

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.*

THE advantages which we may expect to reap from religion are many and great, but not all equally certain: some are exposed to the chances and casualties of human life, and depend upon circumstances that are not under our own conduct and government. Hence it is that the best men are sometimes exposed to the severest trials and sharpest afflictions. But there are two things which sincere religion can never fail of attaining; one of which is the greatest ingredient, nay, the very foundation of all happiness in this world; the other is the happiness and immortality which wait for us in the world to come. This blessing we can only enjoy now through faith and hope, but the other is

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present with us, the certain consequence and necessary attendant upon a mind truly virtuous and religious, I mean, the peace and tranquillity, the ease and satisfaction of mind, which flow not so much from a sense of our having punctually and exactly discharged our duty in all respects, which is more than ever we may hope for, but from a due sense of God and religion, and the uprightness of our desires and intentions to serve him. This advantage is not, properly speaking, a reward given or bestowed upon the virtuous, but it arises from the nature of things, from the frame and contexture of our souls; it is Virtue's own child, her natural offspring, and can never leave or forsake her: for as long as men have a sense of virtue and vice, good and evil, so long will they condemn and punish themselves for transgressing their obligations; so long will they find peace and satisfaction in their obedience.

Since then Nature has given us notice of the being of the Almighty, and shewn us the relation we stand in towards him, and consequently the duty and service which we owe him, it necessarily follows, that this sense, rightly adjusted, and duly pursued, in a regular and honest discharge of our duty towards God, must breed in our mind true peace and comfort, and, consequently, that true religion must be the source and spring even of our temporal happiness and enjoyment. But yet look into the world, and the face of things has quite a different appearance: religion is fearful, suspicious, full of doubts and misgivings of heart, never satisfied

with itself, always seeking, but seldom finding where to fix itself in rest and tranquillity. Hence it comes to pass, that some, not rightly considering the nature and causes of things, misconceive concerning religion itself, and think it better to lay aside all pretences to it, than perpetually to fluctuate in the troubled ocean of doubts and uncertainties that encompass it round about. And thus superstition, by making many miserable in the pursuit of religion, makes others, to avoid being lost in that gulf, throw themselves into another of atheism and irreligion, which is a much deeper. In these two extremes, of insidelity on one side, and superstition on the other, true religion is lost, and, together with it, that peace and comfort, and ease of mind, which belong to it: for view God from which of the two extremes you please, his appearance must be dreadful; you may see him in the terrors of majesty and power, but the kinder rays which flow from his mercy and goodness and benevolence towards mankind will be intercepted from your eyes.

The atheistical unbeliever, if ever he so far forgets himself as to suppose the being of a God for a time, sees nothing of him but the judge and the avenger, and hastens back to his insidelity to screen him from the wrath and justice, which, even in imagination, were insupportable. Superstition is so perpetually encompassed with a thick cloud of its own fears and suspicions, that it cannot discern the beauties and holiness of the Creator: every frightful spectre, that walks in its own imagination, is mistaken for the Deity,

and Superstition adores it, as the wild Indians are said to worship the devil, not for love, but for fear. The case then being thus, that mankind is in a great measure robbed of the present comfort and pleasure of religion, either by infidelity or superstition, it is very well worth our while to search into the causes that lead to this unhappiness, to see what it is that has corrupted this living spring, this fountain of delight, and turned its waters into gall and bitterness.

The words of the text rightly understood, will not only afford us an occasion for this enquiry, but will also direct us in it; and, by shewing us the principles of true religion, will help us to discover the errors and misconceits which are introductive of irreligion and superstition.

The fear of the Lord, says the wise king, is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding. This is not the only place where he expresses himself in this manner: the same thing, with some small variety in the expression, is more than once repeated again in the Book of Proverbs: it is to be met with also in the Psalmist, in the very same words almost; and the thought occurs frequently in the inspired writers: so that this seems to be a common maxim, or principle of religion, that runs through all the sacred records, and by which all good and wise men have guided themselves in the great and momentous concern of religion.

In speaking to these words, I propose to myself these two things.

First, To shew that the text, and other the like passages of holy scripture, will be found, upon examining the sense and reason of them, to contain this general proposition, That a just conception of God, of his excellencies and perfections, is the true foundation of religion.

Secondly, That this just conception of God is the right rule to form our judgments by in all particular matters of religion, and the only thing that can secure us from either atheism or superstition.

First, I will endeavour to shew you, That the text, and other the like passages of scripture, will be found, upon examining the sense and reason of them, to contain this general proposition, That a just conception of God, of his excellencies and perfections, is the true foundation of religion: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*

To this purpose it might be thought sufficient perhaps by some to observe, that fear, whatever limited or enlarged notion you understand it in, is not a voluntary passion: we cannot be afraid or not afraid of things just as we please; but fear necessarily relates to, and arises from, the notion or conception we have of the thing feared. We fear any being in proportion to the power and will which we conceive that being to have either to hurt or to protect us. The different kinds of fear likewise are no otherways distinguishable from one another, than by considering the different conceptions or ideas of the things feared: for fear, being the necessary effect of

Such conceptions, must differ according to the difference of the conceptions. If we join to great power great malice and a settled resolution to do mischief, such an object strikes with terror and confusion, and breeds in our minds a base and slavish fear; if we add to great power great goodness and benevolence, such an object creates an awe and reverence, and fills our hearts with filial fear and veneration. When therefore we say, the fear of this, or fear of that, does so or so, we can have no sense of the proposition, without having a notion of the thing feared. The fear of a tyrant, and the fear of a father, are very different passions; but he that knows not the difference between a tyrant and a father, will never be able to distinguish these passions. When therefore we read, that *the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom*, we can have no understanding of the words without having a just conception of God, by which alone we can judge of the nature of godly fear, and of its operations. Allowing therefore that the wise king, by *the fear of the Lord*, means a right and due fear, it necessarily supposes a right and due conception of the Lord, from which only that right and due fear can flow, which is the mother of wisdom and understanding: for if men misconceive concerning God, either as to his holiness and purity, or as to his mercy or justice, their fear of him will not produce wisdom; which is evident from the infinite follies of the heathen world, which grew out of their false fear and reverence of their gods. This proposition therefore, *The fear of*

God is the beginning of wisdom, is equivalent to this, A just notion and conception of God is the beginning of wisdom.

Having deduced this exposition from the order and nature of things in themselves, let us try the other method, which is more familiar, and see whether we can come to any exposition of these words, which will not lead to the same thing.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: We are to consider what is meant by the *fear of the Lord*. The reason of the enquiry is evidently this, that we experience in ourselves different kinds and degrees of fear, which have very different effects and operations. Some stupify the senses, and rob us of all wisdom and understanding; others render us active and industrious, and give an edge to our invention how to shun and avoid the thing we fear. Of what sort then is the fear of the Lord? Is it an abject slavish fear? No, certainly: all expositors agree to warn you against this sense and interpretation of fear. But were you to ask the reason why the fear of God is not a slavish fear? there is only this reason to be given you, Because God is no tyrant: and I suppose every man of sense will admit this for a good reason: and what else is this but adjusting the sense of fear from the true notion and conception of God? The properties of religious fear, which are mentioned in scripture, are various: *The fear of the Lord is clean*, says the Psalmist: *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil*, says Solomon; and again, *It is a fountain of life*; and again, *In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence*,

Try all these in the same way, and you will find they are deducible only from the notion and conception of God, and are not to be understood without it. The fear of God therefore is not to be expounded from the nature of fear, considered as a distinct passion of the mind, but by considering the natural effect that a just sense and notion of God has upon the mind of a rational creature; for the fear of God signifies that frame and affection of soul, which is the consequence of a just notion and conception of the Deity. It is called *the fear of God*, because, as majesty and power are the principal parts of the idea of God, so fear and reverence are the main-ingredients in the affection that arises from it: not but that love and honour and admiration are included in the notion. And in this latitude the wise king most certainly understood it, when he said, *In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence*: for confidence is no effect of fear, properly so called; but it is a natural effect of a just sense of the Almighty's power and goodness.

There is but one thing that occurs to me that seems to look like a difficulty in this way of arguing, which is this, If the fear of God denotes that sense and affection of mind, which is the natural effect of a true notion and conception of God, it should seem that none should be void of the fear of God, but those only who want right notions of God; and yet we know there are sinners against knowledge, who discover no fear of God, though they can discourse as rationally as others upon his attributes and perfections. There

are two ways by which men may discover that they have a sense of the fear of God: one indeed is by acting agreeably to it; but there is another, which is by conscience: self-condemnation, for acting contrary to the fear of God, is an evident token of the sense of that fear. But if there are any instances where neither of these signs are discoverable, there is a farther account to be given; for it is not merely the speculative notions of God which produce this sense, but there must be a persuasion also that there is a real Being to whom these ideas actually belong. Without this the notion is idle and fruitless: we may raise in our fancies very terrible objects, but they produce little or no effect as long as we contemplate them as the mere creatures of our imagination. In like manner the notion of a God may cause little change in the fool's heart, which says there is no God: and though I am far from thinking that there are many atheists in the world, yet there is in many an heart of secret lurking infidelity, or rather a want of a due belief and persuasion of the reality of the things invisible; which makes religion appear so cold and formal, so void of life and activity. Where this is the case there wants a just conception of God, and no wonder there should want also a due sense of the fear of the Lord. But let us proceed to the second thing, which was to shew,

That this just conception of God is the right rule to form our judgments by in matters of religion, and the only thing that can secure us from either atheism or superstition.

Hitherto we have considered the true meaning of the fear of God; we are now to consider what is affirmed of it: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*; taking wisdom here to mean true religion, as it often does in the books of Solomon, and in the psalms of David. When it is said, that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*, you are not to understand merely that the notion of God is, in point of time, or order of nature, prior to religion; which, though it be true, yet is it not the whole of what is taught concerning the fear of God. All religion, indeed, has a relation to God, and therefore without the sense and notion of a Deity there can be no religion: but there is religion which is folly and superstition, that better suits with any name than that of *wisdom*; and therefore, if the fear of God does only in general shew us the necessity of religion, and does then leave us to take our chance in the great variety of forms and institutions that are to be found in the world, it may be our hap to learn folly as well as wisdom, upon the instigation of this principle. But, in truth, the fear of God does not only shew us the necessity of religion, but likewise teaches us wherein true religion, which is indeed wisdom, does consist, and enables us to judge of our offering, whether it be fit to be laid before the Almighty.

In natural religion this is evidently the case, because in that state there is no pretence to any other rule that can come in competition with this. It is from the notion of a God that men

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come to have any sense of religion, and it is by the same principle only that they determine this to be a proper part of religion, that to be otherwise. When we consider God as Lord and Governor of the world, we soon perceive ourselves to be in subjection, and that we stand obliged, both in interest and duty, to pay obedience to the Supreme: but what is this obedience? and in what acts does it consist? For this we must recur to our natural notion of God. If we conceive him to be holy, pure, and just, we must necessarily judge that he will be pleased with no service but what is agreeable to holiness, purity, and justice: if we conceive him to be a Being good and merciful, a common father to mankind, whose love is without partiality, and equal to all his creatures, we must, upon this view, conclude, that religion binds us not to be hurtful or injurious to any of the sons of men; because it is a contradiction to think that we are bound to serve and obey God, and yet at liberty to injure and abuse those whom he most affectionately loves. Mutual love and benevolence may be a moral duty, arising from the relation of man to man, upon mere principles of reason, exclusive of religion; but it becomes part of our religion from such consideration of God's nature as I have just now mentioned. Take from the notion of God any of the moral perfections that belong to it, and you will find such alteration must influence religion likewise, which will degenerate in the same proportion as the notion of God is corrupted. The superstitious man, view-

ing God through the false perspectives of fear and suspicion, loses sight of his goodness, and sees only a dreadful spectre made up of anger and revenge. Hence religion becomes his torment, and he thinks the worse he uses himself the more he shall please God; and the best service he can pay is that which renders him most miserable.

There are other kinds of superstition, which though they have less of torment and anguish, have not more of reason or religion: such are they which have turned religion into a trade, and found something to offer God in exchange for virtue and holiness. In all these cases the spring is corrupted, the notion of God is lost, or not attended to. What notion has that man of God, who thinks that washing his hands three or four times a day is part of religion? who imagines that penances and pilgrimages, or any thing else, is equivalent to virtue and holiness? Search your notion of God: consider his holiness and purity, and see what you can find to make you think that beating yourself, or washing yourself, or parting with your money, will please him like virtue and holiness. These must appear to be absurd follies to any man who will attend to this principle. In the heathen world, some happily discovered some glimmerings of the true holiness and perfection of God, and were to maintain virtue upon the foot of religion: others perhaps were much better men than their principles of religion led them to be. The natural sense of good and evil, and the re-

lation of man to man, led some generous spirits into the right way. But in this case goodness was not the effect of religion, but of a rational nature; it was a political and sociable virtue, but not a religious one.

It is plain then, both from reason and fact, that a just conception and sense of God is the beginning of wisdom, the fountain from which true religion flows: by this it is that you may distinguish between true and false religion, since that only is true religion which is agreeable to the nature of God. *God is a spirit, says our blessed Lord, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* Here you are referred to the same principle, and by the best authority: you see here our Lord himself inferring the nature of worship from the nature of God.

This may be true, perhaps, you will say, upon the foot of natural religion, where we have nothing but natural notions to direct us; but what is it to us who have the surer word of prophecy to guide and instruct us? In answer to this I would observe, that natural religion is the foundation upon which revelation stands, and therefore revelation can never supersede natural religion without destroying itself. The knowledge of God is, in the nature of things, antecedent to revelation; for there can be no reason for attending to the voice of God till we know who God is. The natural notion of God then is the foundation of revelation, as well as of natural religion, and, consequently, nothing contrary to

this notion can be admitted for revelation any more than for natural religion.

There is indeed a difference which ought always to be remembered, and for want of which some have imagined they have discovered great opposition between natural religion and revelation, where in truth there is none. The difference is this: In natural religion nothing can be admitted that may not be proved and deduced from our natural notions; for every thing must be admitted for some reason, and in natural religion no reason can take place, but this agreeableness of the thing to our natural sense: but in revelation it is otherwise; for revelation introduces a new reason, the will of God, which has, and ought to have, the authority of a law with us. Nor is it plain, from any natural principle, that God cannot enlarge our duty, or oblige us to any thing but what Nature has already obliged us to: it is certain he cannot contradict his own nature, and therefore he can teach us nothing contrary to the natural sense he has given us of himself: but as he has authority to give us laws, he may add to our duty and obligations as he sees fit. And therefore it is not necessary all parts of a revelation should be such as may be proved by natural reason; it is sufficient that they do not contradict it, for the will of God is a sufficient reason for our submission.

But, however, the essentials of religion, even under revelation, must be tried and judged by the same principle. No revelation can dispense with virtue and holiness; for it may as reason-

ably dispense with our believing the being of a God, as with our believing that he can or would vacate the obligations to virtue and holiness: for to remove God out of the world, and to change the essential properties of his nature, is one and the same thing. We may be sure then that all such doctrines, all such rites and ceremonies, as tend to subvert true goodness and holiness, are not of God's teaching or introducing.

Non is there, I believe, a more certain way to keep ourselves stedfastly in the purity of the gospel, than by keeping our eye constantly on this rule. Could enthusiasm, or destructive zeal, ever have grown out of the gospel, had men compared their practices with the natural sense they have of God? Would they not have seen, that to defend even religion by cruelty and bloodshed must be hateful in the sight of God? Could religion ever have degenerated into such folly and superstition, as in some places it has done, had the true notions of God been preserved, and all religious actions examined by it?

On the other hand, some there are who, taking religion to be what it appears to be in the world, find so much folly, and superstition, and uncertainty in it, that they have chosen, as the safer way, to reject all religion: but could men have judged thus perversely had they attended to the true rule, and formed their notions of religion from the nature and wisdom of God, and not from the follies and extravagancies of men? How does the folly and perverseness of others affect your duty to God? or, how came you ab-

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solved from all religion, because others have corrupted theirs? Suppose the people deceived, and the priests either ignorant or superstitious, what then? Does the error of one, or the ignorance of the other, destroy the relation between you and God, and make it reasonable for you to throw off all obedience? The fear of God will teach you another sort of wisdom. This therefore you ought to cultivate and improve, and preserve free from error or corruption, as your surest guide in all doubts, and as the true principle of religious wisdom.

DISCOURSE VI.

PART I.

LUKE X. 29.

*But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus,
And who is my neighbour?*

THE precepts of the law and of the gospel being conceived in general terms, and expressed in the most easy and familiar manner, men of speculative minds, whose business is rather enquiry than practice, have taken so much pains to adjust the limitations and restrictions which they conceive to be applicable to the general rule, that in many cases the duty has been lost in the explication, and the precept has been so pared and cut to the quick by exceptions, that it is no longer of any use or service in common life.

The law of God commands us *to love our neighbours as ourselves*; the interpretation of which

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will better come from our hearts than our heads; for we cannot help feeling the sense of our duty as long as we attend to the motions of nature within ourselves: our own wants and infirmities will shew us the matter and the extent of our obedience, and self-love will direct us in the practice and execution; but when men come to speculate upon the point, and to define the exact bounds of love, and to determine nicely how far the notion of neighbourhood is to be extended, the event too commonly is, that there is but very little love left to be disposed of among our neighbours, and, that it may the better hold out, but very few neighbours left to share in our love. Call a covetous man to the exercise of this duty in an instance of charity; shew him a man oppressed with poverty and hunger, clothed in rags, and destitute of all the comforts and supports of life, and bid him love this poor wretch as himself; he will tell you, perhaps, the law is excellent and good, and he does love the man, and pities his misfortunes, but he has nothing to spare: he is not obliged to love another better than himself, and therefore it is unreasonable to expect that he should straiten and pinch himself to enlarge the conveniencies of others: he grudges him no degree of love, and heartily wishes him at ease and in plenty, but cannot afford any thing towards it out of his little. Or, perhaps, he will question upon what title this man pretends to be his neighbour; he is sure he never saw him before, nor ever heard that he lived near him, and if every body that will may

claim to be his neighbour there will be no end of it, and he may soon give his neighbours all he has, if every one that begs must be his neighbour. There is room in all other instances of our duty for the like subterfuges; and as long as men find comfort in such excuses for their negligence and disobedience, they will never want invention to furnish them.

It may seem strange, perhaps, that the laws of God should be liable to this usage, since, being the transcript of perfect Wisdom, and the work of Him who not only knows but foresees the secrets of all hearts, we might expect to find them so guarded and fenced about, and made so plain and express in all cases, that it should have been in no man's power to question the sense or meaning of the precept, or to cover his iniquity with the least umbrage of an excuse drawn from the interpretation of holy scripture: but there are very good reasons to be given why the law of God is not so explicit and particular. Were the scripture to descend to the consideration of all cases, and to state the exact bounds of our duty in all possible circumstances of life, we might say, perhaps, without being much beholden to a figure of speech, that the world itself could not contain the things that should be written. A law extending itself to such variety of cases and circumstances would be altogether useless, and men might grow old in sin and iniquity before they could possibly learn their duty, or extract the rules proper for their own use out of the infinite variety of laws, many of

which have no respect to them or their circumstances.

Besides, God gave every man a law to direct him when he made him a reasonable creature, and expects obedience in virtue of that law of Nature. The gospel was given not to exclude, but to assist the exercise of reason; and therefore to require a law so exact and circumstantial that there should be no room for the use or obedience of reason, is to preclude men from those nobler instances of duty which flow from the right use of their minds, and which are the proper sacrifice offered by a rational soul to God. The uprightness of a man, and the integrity of his mind, are as discernible in his application of the rules of the gospel, as by any outward acts whatever. A man who reads in the gospel that he ought to love his neighbour as himself, and from his own sense and reason supplies the law with this noble comment, that all the sons of men are his neighbours, is as much a better Christian than the man who extends the law only to his townsmen or his countrymen, as his neighbourhood is more universal.

Farther, a law descending to every particular case would be of no manner of service in correcting the evil complained of; it is the perverseness of the will, and not the weakness of the understanding, that teaches men the evasions of the law: were the law more explicit, they would only take more pains to get rid of its obligations; for the plainness of the law will do but little in correcting the malignity of the will, which yet is

the only thing that stands in need of an improvement. The command of loving our neighbour is so far from wanting to be enlarged, that I believe there is no right-good Christian who thinks any mortal excluded from the benefit of it as it now stands. To what purpose then should it be enlarged? Were it expressed in never-so-general terms, it might still be misunderstood, or perverted, by such as obstinately refuse to see. Suppose the law conceived in the fullest terms; and that it were said that every man in the world is to be esteemed our neighbour, and has a right to our love and assistance, and that it is our duty to do him good; and were this law, so expressed, to be made the standing rule of the courts of inquisition, what would the world be the better for it? For as long as they will maintain that the greatest good they can do their brother is, in order to reform his supposed errors in religion, to whip him and torment him, to sequester his goods and estate, or to deliver him over to the fire, the more universal their rule is, the worse it must fare with all the world; and, whilst they have such notions of doing good, the only thing to be wished for is, that they might think it their duty to hate all mankind.

Since therefore it is impracticable to give rules and directions for all possible cases, and to adjust the general laws of virtue and obedience to the great variety of circumstances incident to human life, without destroying the end of all laws, which are intended for directions and rules; but, were they to take in all particular cases, would soon

grow too voluminous to be serviceable, there being no life long enough, no industry sufficient for such a study, and no memory strong enough to retain such a body of institutes: since reason and judgment would be of no farther use in virtue and obedience, were men in all cases limited by particular clauses and provisions; because it would be great presumption for men to exercise their reason and their judgment, in order to govern and direct themselves, were the law of God so express and particular in all cases as to exclude farther enquiry, by which means the noblest instance of virtue, which is shewn in the free choice that reason makes of what is good and amiable, guided by the general directions of God's law, would be oftentimes lost and impracticable: since likewise the end proposed to be served by such numerous and particular laws would not be obtained, but men would still find room to cavil at their duty, and be able to furnish pretences to evade it, as is evident from this plain reason, that it is not want of knowledge, but of will to obey, which makes men wrest and torture the law of God: had they therefore more light from the most express directions, yet still their disinclination to virtue would be the same, and produce the same ill effects; and, consequently, were the laws of the gospel ever so much enlarged, the same difficulties would remain, as long as the same perverseness of will continues among men: from these considerations, I say, it does appear, that the gospel is not to be charged with the doubts and

disputes which often arise upon the laws and precepts delivered in it, the gospel having all the perfection requisite in a law designed for the government and instruction of rational creatures; but we must look out elsewhere to find the cause that may give us a satisfactory account why men so often and so widely differ upon the plainest points of duty, and whence the difficulties and scruples grow, which perplex even the clearest precepts of Christian morality.

The text, if carefully attended to, will discover to us the cause to which this evil owes its growth and increase; and the parable which our Saviour put forth, instead of a direct answer to the lawyer's question, will teach us where to seek and find the remedy.

Interpreters are not agreed in the meaning of the former part of the text, *But he, willing to justify himself, said*; for it does not appear what occasion he had for any justification of himself: no accusation had been brought against him; nobody had charged him with any neglect or contempt of the law; so far otherwise, that our Lord had commended his wise answer, and promised him life if he obeyed the terms which he himself had proposed: *And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live*: upon which immediately follow the words of the text, *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?* Besides, it does not presently appear how any justification of himself could arise out of this question, or any answer that might be given to it. What fault did

he mean to excuse by asking, *Who is my neighbour?* or, How did his virtue or innocence depend upon the answer that should be returned to this enquiry? These difficulties, I say, have led interpreters into different sentiments: but, without examining their opinions, I shall propose to you one that seems to be the true, because the most easy and natural exposition of the place.

This lawyer came to our Lord, and, tempting him, said, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* Our Lord returns him to the law for an answer to his question, saying, *What readest thou?* He readily answered, that in the law he found that he was *to love the Lord his God with all his might, and his neighbour as himself.* This account our Saviour approves, and says unto him, *Thou hast answered right;* and adds, that if he would practise the law as well as he seemed to understand it, he was in no danger: *This do, and thou shalt live.* But in this part, relating to practice, the lawyer well knew how this precept in particular, of loving our neighbours, had been loaded with exceptions and limitations by the Jewish doctors, and that he had never esteemed any body to be his neighbour who was not of the same blood, and who did not profess the same religion with himself; for which reason he hated many, who, according to the letter, were his neighbours, as the Samaritans were, who dwelt very near, but were the aversion of every Jew, being esteemed as the corrupters of the faith and true religion. Since therefore life eternal depended upon his obedience to the law, as he had heard from our

Saviour, and since whether his obedience were such as it ought to be depended wholly upon the Jewish interpretation of the law, and could no otherwise be maintained than by excluding from the rights and privileges of neighbourhood all who were not of the stock and faith of Israel; in order therefore to his own justification he very properly puts the question to our Lord, *And who is my neighbour?* for as this question should be resolved, he would be found either to have fulfilled or transgressed the commandment. Had our Lord determined in favour of the Jewish interpretation, and told him that those only were his neighbours who were of the same stock and family, and who worshipped God in the same manner that he did, the lawyer had been justified in his practice, and his obedience might have deserved commendation, as well as his prudent answer out of the law had done before; but when our Saviour had forced him into a confession that even the Samaritan was his neighbour, he stood condemned by his own sentence, and by the example of the Samaritan which he had approved, and was sent away with this short but full reproof and admonition, *Go, and do thou likewise.*

The words thus expounded shew us upon what motives men act, and what it is that prejudices their minds in the interpretation of God's law; they are *willing to justify themselves*, and therefore employ all their force and skill to make the command countenance their practice, and to speak such language only as may be consistent with their inclinations. When our actions are

such as the law enjoins, when we do what is commanded, and forbear what is forbidden, then is our obedience perfect. This is so plain a description of obedience, with respect to the law which is to be obeyed, that it cannot be disputed. A truly virtuous man endeavours to bend all his passions and inclinations towards the command, and to make them entirely submissive to it. The man who loves not his duty is often uneasy and restless under the pain of self-condemnation, and knowing that all would be well did but his actions and the law agree, he labours to bend the law towards his inclinations, that it may justify him in all his doings, and yield him the pleasure and satisfaction of thinking himself righteous.

It is no great wonder, when men are so deeply engaged in any error either of practice or doctrine, that they should labour to reconcile themselves as far as possible with the commands and injunctions of God's law; for as great as the pleasure of sin is, as large as the profit of iniquity often is, they cannot of themselves sustain the spirit of a man against the girds and lashes of a guilty conscience. Whilst the pleasure is new and in its full vigour, whilst the gain is counting over and treasuring up, the mind, perhaps, lost in the present enjoyment, may want no other comfort; but the pleasures of vice have their intermissions, and are succeeded by cold damps, which seize the spirits. The gains of iniquity are not always pouring themselves in; when the ill-gotten wealth is bagged up, there will be spare time more than enough for a man,

to ask himself how he got these mighty riches. In these seasons of reflection, in these intervals of thought and reason, the soul wants other comforts than such as can arise from pleasures that are past, or from treasures that are hidden in the earth. A man can never long like a bargain which he really thinks he shall suffer for hereafter; and therefore, to quiet and ease himself, he frames many devices how to escape the punishment he dreads: being easy to be persuaded, he soon convinces himself, that the laws of God have been too rigorously expounded, and pressed too far; that, in truth, he has not offended against the law of God, but only against the cruel law of the interpreters, whose pleasure it is to lay heavy burdens upon other shoulders, which themselves care not to touch with one of their fingers. By these means the easy casuist comes to such a temper with himself, that he can at once enjoy and justify his iniquity.

When the young man in the gospel came to our Lord, enquiring upon what terms he might inherit eternal life, our Lord set the commands before him: "Do not commit adultery: do not kill: do not steal: do not bear false witness: honour thy father and thy mother." Thus far all was well: these terms he willingly accepted, for he had been virtuously bred, and had observed these things from his youth; and having no guilt to justify, he had no exceptions to make to the commandments. Our Lord, delighted with his towardly disposition, would have led him on to greater perfection: "Yet lackest thou,"

says he, "one thing: Sell all that thou hast, and
 "distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have
 "treasure in heaven; and come and follow me."

The young man, who had not committed adultery, nor been guilty of theft, or disobedience to his parents, and therefore had no fault to find with the former laws, had, it seems, a great estate, and therefore could by no means digest this, *but was exceeding sorrowful, for he was very rich*: sorrowful, not because he was rich, for then he might easily have complied, and eased his sorrow, but sorrowful to find any thing in the gospel inconsistent with his riches. How gladly would he have listened to any softening of this precept? how would he have adored a teacher who would have made him a consistent title to heaven and his estate? In this instance you see the disposition which makes men strive with the law of God, and labour to render it of a piece with their own affections: In others we will shew you the practice.

The Jews had a law, commanding that they should honour their father and their mother; which implied an obligation upon children to support and maintain their indigent parents; a precept in itself so just and reasonable, that it is one of the prime laws of Nature; but the Jews, who were hard-hearted to their own flesh and blood, were uneasy under this burden; and yet the law was plain; and they could not be satisfied till they had made the law comply: they therefore set up tradition against the express law, and found a way to dissolve the uneasy obligation; for thus they

taught, as our Saviour justly reproves them: "If
 " a man shall say to his father or mother, It is
 " a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited
 " by me, he shall be free: And ye suffer him no
 " more to do ought for his father or mother,
 " making the word of God of none effect through
 " your tradition." The law was to be supplanted,
 you see, to justify the open breach and violation
 of it.

But to come nearer our own times, and to still
 plainer instances: You know in how many places
 the scripture expressly forbids us to pay any wor-
 ship or service to any creature, but that we should
 worship and serve the Lord, and him only. In
 this respect God has declared himself to be a jea-
 lous God, and that he will not give his honour to
 another. Of the ten commandments two are
 spent in securing this fundamental point of true
 religion, and the gospel has, not only in many,
 but in all its parts, confirmed this great article.
 Notwithstanding all this care, it is well known,
 that no point of doctrine or practice has been
 more controverted, even among Christians, than
 this very article. Were the case less notorious
 than it is, you would say, perhaps, How is this
 possible? How could it enter into any man's head
 so to misunderstand the scriptures? What could
 lead to such interpretations? That they are so in-
 terpreted is very plain, and the account that may
 be given why they are so is also as plain. It was
 not misunderstanding or misinterpreting the scrip-
 tures that led to the corruptions in practice, but
 the corrupt practices first got possession, and men,

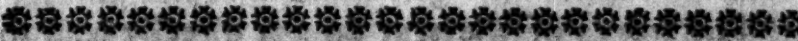
willing to justify themselves, coined new interpretations of scripture to support their new practices; and how violent the inclination to justify themselves is, may be easily understood, when we see it beat down such express, such plain, such often-repeated injunctions of the word of God. There is not, I believe, one man, whether Christian, Jew, or Pagan, who has ever heard or read the gospel, but thinks that all image worship, all creature worship, is absolutely forbidden in it, those only excepted who are involved in the practice. Could the Jews give themselves leave to reproach the gospel with such doctrines as some Christians pretend to maintain out of it, they would desire no better arguments for their rejecting it, nor could they indeed have better. To serve and to worship God in prayer, and praise, and humble adoration, are things hard to be understood to none but scholars: in themselves they are plain; but the notions have been so refined, in order to justify modern corruptions, that they are become intricate. The command is plain that God only is to be worshipped; how then must room be made for worshipping any other? In order to this, worship is to be split into many kinds, and one most religiously preserved to God, in controversy at least, that the others may the more freely be imparted to the creature. To this eagerness of justifying a corrupt practice, we owe the many curious distinctions that have been invented to darken and confound the clearest truths of the gospel.



DISCOURSE VI.



PART II.



THERE is nothing more complained of, and yet nothing more commonly practised among all parties, than the perverting the holy scriptures, to support and maintain the opinions and doctrines, which are the distinguishing marks and characters of different communions. This holds true of all sects, in proportion as they have departed from the genuine doctrines and practices of Christianity; for all sects equally labour to maintain their tenets, and more or less pervert the scripture, as they have more or less gone astray from it.

The same disposition is perpetually shewing itself in private life. There are not so many self-condemned sinners in the world as is generally thought; for it is much if he who has long con-

tinued in any sin has not found out some excuse or some justification for his vice. A man, who has nothing to judge by but reason and scripture, would wonder how the scripture was ever made a party to such a defence; but those who are friends to any vice have something else that guides their judgment, self-love and self-interest, which are such candid interpreters, that no vice need fear being tried by the scriptures, so long as they fit as judges.

From what cause it arises that men thus deal with the scriptures and their own reason, has been already observed; let us now consider how we may best secure ourselves against this great abuse.

The words of the text do not directly lead to this enquiry, nor will they afford much light in it; but if we look a little forward, and observe by what means our Lord brought this disputer, to do justice to the law of God, and to own even the Samaritan to be the Jew's neighbour, which was a point constantly determined otherwise by the Jewish doctors, it will teach us how men are to be dealt with, by what art they may be led in to the confession of truth, and forced to give up the excuses and pretences under which they have long sheltered themselves and their iniquity.

Since therefore what is farther to be said to this argument must arise from our Lord's answer to this question put to him in the text, it will be expedient, in the first place, to set our Lord's answer before you in a true light, which has been obscured by unnecessary difficulties raised by in-

terpreters. In answer to the lawyer's question, *And who is my neighbour?* our Lord puts a case to him for his own judgment: "A certain man travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves, lost all he had, was stripped naked, was wounded, and left for dead; a priest passed by him in this condition unregarded; a Levite did likewise; but a Samaritan, happening to travel that road, had compassion on him, dressed his wounds, set him on his own beast, and left him in good hands, engaging himself to answer whatever should be expended in the care and cure of him." Upon this case our Lord asks this question, *Which now of these three thinkest thou was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go thou, and do likewise.* Great pains have been taken by some so to adjust this case, that it might yield a proper answer to the lawyer's question. He asked, *Who is my neighbour?* that is, Whom am I obliged to love as myself? So that our Lord ought to have determined the extent and right of neighbourhood, and from thence deduced the obligations of love and assistance; whereas the case supposes the love and assistance, and from thence infers the relation of neighbourhood. The priest and the Levite were not neighbours, because they did not assist the wounded man; the Samaritan was his neighbour, because he shewed kindness to him. And if this be so, that no man is our neighbour till we have either shewed or received kindness from him, we cannot then, from the right of

neighbourhood, infer the obligations of love, but must determine, from the mutual exercise of love, the notion and extent of neighbourhood: and if this be the case, no man can offend against the law of loving his neighbour; for if none are our neighbours but those whom we love, then every man certainly loves his neighbours.

But if we consider the case fairly, and view it in its due light, this supposed difficulty will vanish. The question was asked by the lawyer out of a desire to justify himself: he had learned to call no man neighbour who was not of the same stock and religion with himself: Samaritans he expressly hated, and justified his hatred because they were deserters from the true worship, and despisers of the temple which was in Jerusalem. This great error our Lord was to wrest from him, which was not to be done by battling his prejudices, and arguing upon the true sense and meaning of the law: the lawyer, not unaccustomed to such exercise, would have held up the dispute, and stood resolute against any such convictions: our Saviour therefore puts him a case, and states it so, that his prejudices were all shut out, and could have no influence in the determination: A Jew therefore is put into the place of distress: *A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves.* Here could be no exception taken against the person. Had the Samaritan been placed in the same case, and his calamities painted in the most moving colours, he would have found no pity from the Jew, who would have excepted to his religion, and thought

himself very much in the right to have been an enemy to the enemy of God; but when one of his nation was represented in misery, he saw reason in every thing that was done for his relief. A priest and a Levite are said to pass by and neglect him: these persons stood in all those relations to the distressed, which the lawyer owned to be the just bonds and ties of neighbourhood; they were of his kindred, and they met at the same altar to worship the same God; he could not therefore but condemn their want of bowels to their brother. A Samaritan is represented as passing by, and shewing the greatest tenderness and compassion to the poor Jew: this could not but be approved; even the prejudice of the lawyer carried him in these circumstances to a right judgment; for, knowing how inveterately the Jew hated the Samaritan, he could not but the more admire and approve the Samaritan's kindness to the Jew. Upon this case our Lord puts him to determine which was neighbour to the man in distress; or, which is the same thing, which of the three acted most agreeably to the law of God, commanding that we should *love our neighbour as ourself*: the lawyer answers, *He that shewed mercy*; confessing that the Samaritan had fulfilled the law; which was condemning the Jewish exposition and his own prejudices: for if a Jew was rightly forbidden to shew kindness to a Samaritan, because of the difference in religion between them, the same reason made it unlawful for a Samaritan to assist a Jew. Our Saviour approves his judgment, and bids him only apply

it to himself, *Go thou, and do likewise*; that is, Since you commend the Samaritan for acting like a neighbour to the Jew, do you learn to act like a neighbour to the Samaritan: for this is the true force of the word *likewise*. For a Jew to be kind to a Jew only, is not to do like the good Samaritan, who was kind, not to a Samaritan only, but to a Jew also. And thus you see the case led to a full determination of the question proposed, and shewed that no restrictions were to be laid upon the law of God, that even those whom he accounted as his worst enemies, the very Samaritans, were entitled to the benefit of it, and ought to be treated with the love and kindness which is due to our neighbours.

From our Lord's conduct in this case, we may learn how to apply to the passions and prejudices of mankind, and by what art truth is best and most successfully introduced, where error has been long in possession. Were it a defect in our reason and understanding that made us disagree, and judge and act differently, in cases where we have one and the same rule to go by, no human application could reach the distemper, since it is not in our power to enlarge the faculties which are bounded by God and Nature: but our reason and our understanding are not in fault; they want only to be set free, and to be delivered from the bondage of passion and prejudice, to judge rightly in cases of morality and natural justice. If you look into the world, you will see men as much distinguished by their vices as by the features of their faces. Few men have

many reigning vices at once : covetousness, well planted in the mind, will starve out all other passions ; it will suffer hardly any other vice to live by it. The same may be observed of luxury and intemperance, and of lewdness and ambition ; where any of them flourish, they take up the whole man : other vices are admitted only accidentally, and at spare hours, or as they may be subservient to the main inclination. I observe this, because, upon examination, you will find, that men's reason and judgment fail in the very same proportion that vice and passion prevail.

Did men judge perversely in all cases alike, we should not easily assign any other cause but want of judgment and reason, since nothing less would account for the total absence and defect of it ; but when we find men to have reason in most cases, and to be dark only in some few, when we see them exercising their minds freely and impartially, generally speaking, but in some few instances obstinately bent to hug and to maintain a lie, it puts us to a necessary enquiry to search out some other cause that may answer this odd appearance, and account for a man's want of reason and judgment in one or two instances, who acts and judges as reasonably as his neighbours in all others. Now, if from the experience of human life you find that a man's reason and his virtue forsake him in the same instances, that he judges perversely in the same cases in which he acts perversely, and remarkably so in them only, this will teach you what it is that misguides, or rather enslaves the mind, and by what me-

thods the freedom and liberty of reason may be restored. If the covetous man rightly condemns all yice, and perversely defends his own; if the voluptuous man abhors covetousness, fraud, and deceit, whilst he looks on his own pleasures as innocent and harmless, and can devoutly bless himself that he is no extortioner, that he does not devour the widow's house, and yet thinks himself under no great condemnation for seducing the widow's daughter, which is her richest treasure; if the ambitious man equally and justly condemns both, and yet sees no harm, no reason to be displeased with himself, for all the wild havoc which his ambition makes in the world: if these things, I say, are so, and that they are so daily experience witnesseth, it is evident what bias influences the judgment of men, when they obstinately maintain and defend the cause of error or of vice. It is *self* that always lyes at the bottom: it is not so much the vice as *self* that is to be defended; and if you can separate *self* from the vice, the vice will soon fall under the common sentence of Reason, and be left to be condemned with its fellows.

By this honest, this holy art, our Lord convinced the lawyer, who put the question of the text to him. He asked the question, intending that none should be admitted into the number of his neighbours who were not nearly allied to him, of the same nation at least. Our Saviour states a case to him, and puts it so, that his prejudices were all thrown out and silenced. The consequence was, that he who wanted to exclude

almost all mankind from a right to his good offices, in a few minutes owns even the Samaritan, his most hated enemy, to be the Jew's neighbour; and, by owning and accepting the Samaritan's good offices done to the Jew under the relation of a neighbour, he confessed the Samaritan's right, in that relation, to expect and receive the good offices of the Jew.

By the same method the prophet Nathan made David, in the very height of sin and extravagance, give sentence upon himself and his iniquity. The wretched king had taken the wife of Uriah to his bed, and had slain the husband by the sword of the children of Ammon. When he received the message of Uriah's death, which ought to have filled him with horror and confusion, he sent this comfort to the captain of the host, which, no doubt, his false heart had first administered to himself, *Let not the thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another*: and so satisfied he was with his reasoning upon this accident of war, as he was willing to esteem it, that he soon sent for the unfortunate brave man's widow, and she became his wife. In this state of security and enjoyment the prophet Nathan comes to him: had he openly taxed him with the murder, perhaps the king had justified himself, and said to the prophet as he did to his captain, *The sword devoureth one as well as another*; or perhaps the prophet had been rebuked for his saucy intrusion, and been forced to fly the presence of the angry king; but the

prophet came with a complaint to the king of a great oppression, which a very rich man had been guilty of towards a very poor one. David was ready to hear and redress such wrong, for this case stirred no prejudices; himself seemed unconcerned in it. The prophet's case was this; "A rich man had a friend come to visit him, and for his entertainment he sent and killed a poor neighbour's solitary ewe-lamb, which had been bred tame among his children, and was a great fondling; though he had large flocks of his own, and many herds, which would have yielded him any entertainment for his friend; but he spared his own numerous flocks, and robbed his poor neighbour of his one lamb, to feast his friend." The case was hard in itself, and the prophet had represented it with all the moving and tender circumstances that could be thought on. David, fired at such flagrant injustice and oppression, swore, *As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die.* When the king had passed sentence, then the prophet opened the secret, and said, *Thou art the man.* The ewe-lamb was the wife of Uriah, whom thou hast taken from her husband, though thou hadst wives and concubines in abundance: thou hast not only robbed the poor man of his one ewe-lamb, but thou hast added murder to thine oppression; thou hast killed the poor man also; thou hast slain Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon. The king, upon this charge, had no retreat left to his justification: he that

had declared the man should die who had killed his poor neighbour's lamb, could not justify himself, who had killed his poor neighbour, that he might the more easily enjoy his wife; and therefore he had nothing left but this plain confession, *I have sinned against the Lord.*

Thus our Saviour also, under the parable of an householder and his vineyard, made the Jews bear witness to the justice of God, in rejecting their nation from being his people. When he had represented how ill the husbandmen treated the Lord of the vineyard; how they abused his servants, and destroyed his Son; even the Jews could give righteous sentence in their own case, veiled under these figures, and adjudge the wicked husbandmen to destruction, and the vineyard to be let to better tenants.

It is no hard matter to get truth out of men, if you can once get beyond their prejudices, and separate the truth from all personal views and interests; for reason is sufficiently clear where it is not clouded and obscured by passion and affection. The heathen moralists seem to be sensible of this, when they clothe the most beneficial instructions in the dress of fable; the only reason of which is, that no man is concerned in the success of a fable, and therefore will judge impartially; which, if the instruction were brought home to him, and applied to his own case, he would not perhaps do. A passionate man will be restrained from his revenge by no prudential considerations; he despises them all; they are

all the lessons of cowardice, and the tokens of a mean spirit; and yet he never reads the fable of an horse, who, to revenge himself, called in a man's assistance, and taught him how to mount, from which time he lost all liberty, and has been a slave ever since, but he laughs at the horse's folly, and his impotent desire of revenge.

The consequences from what has been said are plain, and I shall but just touch them.

First, It is evident that the true art of convincing any man of his error is to throw him as much as possible out of the case; for the less a man is concerned himself, the better he judges. You are not to stir and fret his prejudices, but to decline them; not to reproach him with the error you condemn, but to place the error at a sufficient distance from him, that he may have a true light to view it in.

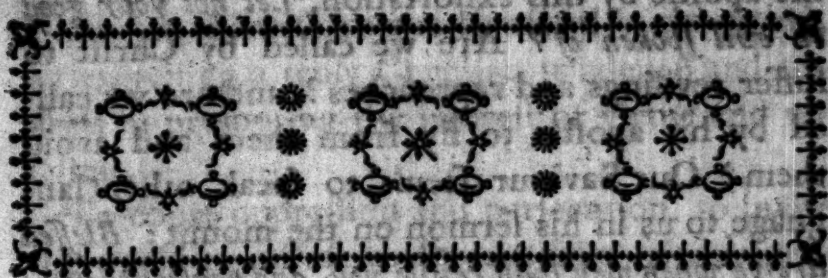
Secondly, In private life it is plain from hence, that innocence is the only true preservative of reason and judgment: guilt will dispose you to seek excuses and subterfuges, and mislead you in your opinion of yourself and your duty. When once you find yourself labouring to justify your actions, and searching for expositions that may suit your inclinations, from that moment you may date your loss of freedom.

Thirdly, If you find yourself involved in the case you are to judge of, instead of seeking for new reasons and arguments to form your opinion by, you had much better look back, and reflect what sense you had of this matter before

the cause was your own; for it is ten to one but that judgment was much more free and impartial than any you will make now: or consider, if the case admits it, what is the sense of the sober and virtuous part of the world; you may more safely trust them than yourself, where your passions are concerned: at least, suppose your enemy in the same circumstances with yourself, and doing what you find yourself inclined to do, and consider what judgment you should make of him, and so judge of yourself: by these means, perhaps, we may preserve ourselves from the fatal influences which vice and passion have over the reason and understanding of mankind.

DISCOURSE

The world was your own; for it is in the power
of judgment was much more free and impar-
tial than any you will make now; or consider
if the case admits it, what is the fault of the
her and virtuous part of the world; you may
more fairly treat them than yourself, when your
passions are concerned: as first, suppose your
enemy in the same circumstances with yourself,
and doing what you had yourself inclined to do,
and consider what judgment you should make of
him, and so judge of yourself: by these means,
perhaps, we may preserve ourselves from the
fatal influence which vice and passion have over
the reason and nobility of mankind.



DISCOURSE VII.



ROMANS xiv. 16.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of.

IN describing the condition of our Christian warfare, St. Peter tells us, "If, when ye
" do well, and suffer for it, ye take it pa-
" tiently, this is acceptable with God:" To this, says he, you are called by the example of Christ, who suffered reproaches willingly, and, *when he was reviled, reviled not again.* This is a duty in which one would think there should be no danger of any man's over-acting his part. Reproach and contempt are not such desirable riches that we need be warned against their temptations, or cautioned lest we too earnestly pursue after them. We are apt enough to shrink at the approach of calumny, and to invent plausible excuses for the neglect of a duty, which performed, would expose us to envy and ill-will. What then means

the apostle by this exhortation, *Let not your good be evil spoken of?* Are we called by Christ to suffer revilings and reproaches? and are we called by his apostle to fly from them and avoid them? Our Saviour seems to speak other language to us in his sermon on the mount: *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you:* and if it be our happiness to be reviled, how is it our duty to take care not to be evil spoken of for our good?

But suppose, however, that it is no way inconsistent with our Christian duty to avoid the calumny and reproach of the world, yet still is it in our power to stop the mouth of malice and wickedness? When we do our duty, can we help it if others will speak evil of our good? Why are not they rather exhorted not to speak evil of our good, than we not to let our good be evil spoken of? It is not in our power to govern people's tongues: is it not enough therefore that the thing we do is good, but must it likewise ly upon us to secure our good from the attempts of malice and envy? Is it not sufficient that we suffer patiently under the malice of wickedness, but must we partake in the guilt of it too; and shall it be imputed to us as a crime that we let our good be evil spoken of?

Such reasonings as these perhaps the text may suggest at first hearing; but, when maturely considered, it will afford excellent instruction for our conduct in the pursuit of those things which are in themselves truly good and praise-worthy: it will teach us not only how to be good in our-

selves, but likewise how to be useful in the world, by exercising a truly Christian prudence and address in promoting the interest of virtue and religion.

To court oppression and persecution, to invite the world to misuse us for the sake of our profession, is far from being a duty to which the gospel has called us. It is neither for the interest of our religion, nor the glory of our Master, that we should voluntarily expose either ourselves or our doctrine to the hatred and contempt of the world; in both cases our Saviour has given other directions: "Give not," says he, "that which is holy unto the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you," Matth. vii. 6. And when he sent his disciples forth to preach, he expressly commanded them to *beware of men*; not only allowing, but requiring them to have a regard to their own safety, and cautiously to shift the dangers to which they were necessarily to be exposed.

This may satisfy us of the lawfulness and expediency of guarding against the dangers that may attend the practice and profession of religion in an evil world, and clear our way to the understanding the extent and meaning of the apostle's advice, *Let not your good be evil spoken of.*

The rule is general, and extends itself to all parts of our Christian conversation: it stands applied indeed by the apostle to a particular case, which was matter of controversy in the church of Rome at the time this letter was written to

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them: but as the rule does not arise out of the particular circumstances of that case, there will be no necessity of considering it with reference to the dispute which the apostle had in his view, but we may deduce it from the general principles of Christian prudence and charity in which it is founded. And that we may proceed clearly to the point we aim at, I shall,

First, Enquire what we are to understand the apostle to mean by *our good*.

Secondly, Endeavour to shew that *our good* is often exposed to be *evil spoken of* through our own indiscretion; and, consequently, that it is often in our own power to prevent it. From whence,

In the last place, will appear the reasonableness of the duty enjoined us in the text.

First, We are to enquire what we are to understand the apostle to mean by *our good*. And here we may meet with different opinions. Some by *our good*, understand our religion, which is indeed every Christian's chief good; and, according to this sense of the words, the apostle must be understood to exhort us to have a regard to the honour of the gospel in all our actions, and to administer no occasion to the enemies of our religion either to deride or despise our holy calling. And thus the text amounts to an argument, or exhortation, to move us to a simplicity of manners, and an inoffensive behaviour, for fear lest we bring a reproach upon our profession. But the apostle seems to aim at something farther: his business here is not to deter us from the practice

of evil, but to direct us in the use and practice of that which is good, that our virtue may be without offence, and secured from calumny and reproach: and *our good*, mentioned in the text, is not the topic from which the apostle draws an argument or exhortation, but is the subject-matter concerning which he is giving directions. According to this interpretation of the words, the text may be thus paraphrased, "Be not content with merely doing that which is in itself good and commendable, but look forward to the consequences which are likely to attend it, and endeavour to prevent any mischief that may grow out of it to yourself or others, that your good may be inoffensive and irreproachable." In this sense it is that I propose to consider the text, and shall now proceed.

Secondly, To shew that *our good* is often exposed to be evil spoken of through our own indiscretion; and, consequently, that it is often in our own power to prevent it.

There is no such thing as being truly good and virtuous till we are got to be above the temptations of the world, and free from the servitude of courting its opinion: but then it is too common a mistake for men to think, that to be above the temptations of the world is the same thing as to despise the world and all that belong to it: and hence it is that virtue often contracts such a moroseness, and becomes so untractable, that it can be of no public use or benefit, but is confined to its own cell, the poor honest heart that possesses it. Nor is this the only inconvenience;

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the cause of virtue itself often suffers by the zeal and indiscretion of such mistaken votaries; they look with disdain on all the prudent methods by which goodness may be advanced, and censure them as the effects of worldly wisdom and cunning; and, provided the thing they do be in itself justifiable, they are above considering the consequences that may attend it; nay, the greater the inconveniencies are which threaten them, the more eagerly they embrace them, esteeming it to be the most generous part of virtue to suffer for that which is good. This sort of inflexible goodness naturally runs out into disdain and aversion, and makes men value themselves more for hating a knave than they would do for reforming him, and to look upon it as an higher degree of virtue to reproach men with their vices than it is to correct and amend them.

What success must attend this method of propagating virtue and religion may be soon known, by considering the temper and disposition of mankind. To vex and exasperate men can serve only to make them stubborn in their vices, and obstinate in their opinions, and all that is got by it is to expose the good you do to reproach, and to give the enemies of religion occasion to blaspheme. Zeal is the noblest grace, when duly tempered with charity and prudence, and, whilst it continues under their influence, it produces the noblest fruit; but when it breaks loose from those restraints, it grows wild and extravagant, and becomes the grief of wise men, and the sport and laughter of fools.

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|| This is one way by which men expose their good to be evil spoken of. Their mistake lyes in not rightly distinguishing between a servile compliance with the world, and a prudent behaviour towards it; and yet there is as much difference between them as between virtue and vice: one is the way which men who sacrifice honour and conscience to their interest make use of; the other is the method which wise and good men take to recommend the practice of virtue and religion. And what a wide difference is this! In the first case, to comply with the world you must be like it, you must conform yourself to it; in the other you treat the world civilly, that it may the more easily become like you, that you may gain upon it, and instil the principles of virtue, which may be infused by gentle degrees, but cannot be obruded by noise and violence.

Those who are of too stiff a virtue to court the world into a compliance with that which is good, may do well to consider how our apostle is to be justified in the character he has given us of himself: "Though I be free from all men, yet have
 " I made myself servant unto all, that I might
 " gain the more. Unto the Jews I became as a
 " Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that
 " are under the law, as under the law, that I
 " might gain them that are under the law; to
 " them that are without the law, as without the
 " law, (being not without the law to God, but un-
 " der the law to Christ), that I might gain them
 " that are without law; to the weak became I
 " as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am

“made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some,” 1 Cor. ix. 19. &c. Into what a variety of shapes did he turn himself, to gain upon the affections of men, that he might the more easily gain admision for the gospel of Christ! Had he fallen directly upon their infirmities and mistakes, he might have fired their minds, and stopped their ears to his instruction. He knew that patience and gentle teaching would by degrees get the mastery of their errors, and lead them, without tumult or opposition, to the acknowledgment of the truth; that their prejudices would wear out, and, as the light of the gospel began to dawn in their hearts, their affections would take a new turn of themselves, which at present were not to be stemmed. He used the art of a skilful pilot, who chuses to coast it along the shore when the tide runs too high in the channel, as knowing it to be not only the safest but the shortest way to the point he makes.

Yet thus to court the affections of men is by many thought below the dignity of religion: but where does this indignity ly? Ought not men to be made in love with virtue and religion? Yes, you will say: And how is this to be done? Must it not be by engaging their affections in the cause of religion? Undoubtedly it must: and is it then necessary to engage men’s affections in the cause of religion? and is it yet an unworthy attempt to endeavour to engage them? How can these things be made to agree? But if it must be allowed that it is necessary to apply to men’s affections in the cause of virtue and religion, it

will shew the reasonableness of the apostle's advice in the text, and the necessity there is of having recourse to Christian prudence and wisdom to direct us in the practice even of that which is good: for all things have not the same appearance to all men; nay, the same object appears differently to the same man, as it is exposed in different lights, which holds as true with respect to the eyes of the mind as of the body; and therefore it lyes upon us to guard against any ill impressions that may be made upon others by the good we do.

This care not to offend is the foundation of civility and good-breeding in common life, and will likewise be productive of mutual love and condescension in religion: it will teach us to be tender of each other's infirmities, and to avoid the occasions of giving offence, which men who have not this care upon their minds rather labour to seek and to improve. Let us but view the difference there will be in one Christian grace, when attended with this care, and when not: let the grace be zeal, which is in itself, without doubt, an excellent gift; but where men have no regard how far they trust or offend others, how rash and intemperate does it grow, in reproaching not only the vices, but the follies and weaknesses of mankind! how easily does it degenerate into censoriousness, and transport men beyond all bounds of charity and discretion! the consequence is, that it is immediately surrounded with enemies of its own raising, and suffers under the names of fury and uncharitableness. But,

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on the other side, where it is found in company with prudence, and joined with a care not to offend, it is a gentle and heavenly flame, which warms without scorching; it falls upon its right object, the honour of God, and the good of men, and confines itself to such methods only as may best serve to promote both: it will therefore never run into any indecencies of passion, which are unbecoming the cause it maintains; nor will it provoke and exasperate those whom it labours to reform, as knowing what little benefit men can receive by being ill-treated. Thus will it secure itself from being evil spoken of, and appear with advantage in the eyes of all that behold it. But, further:

Some there are who have so little regard to the securing their good from being evil spoken of, that their zeal for good arises even from envy and strife. This spirit is still in being; and it is no uncommon thing for men to be spitefully good, and to delight in the opportunities of exasperating others who differ from them. Men often fall upon subjects for no other reason but because they know how disagreeable they are to some of the company; and, to justify themselves, they say, that men ought not to be ashamed when they are in the right, or afraid of owning the truth; which are two very good reasons very sadly applied; for men ought to be ashamed of making this use of truth, which is merely insulting the prejudices of mankind, and not correcting them. It is a very unnatural effect of love for the truth, to labour to make others hate it;

and yet what else can be expected from these measures? To make a reproach of the truth; and to upbraid men with it, is to place it in such a light before them, that it must necessarily appear to them a frightful object. It is certain that men are never to be complimented at the expense of truth or religion, nor can too hard a name be given to the mean spirit that makes men always join in the opinion of their company; nor are the opportunities which conversation affords, of justifying ourselves and our opinions from the misapprehensions of others, to be neglected. It is mightily for the advancement of peace and truth that men should rightly understand each other, and this is one of the best ends that is served by conversation; and therefore there is the greater mischief in perverting it, and using it as an opportunity of revenging ourselves: the consequence of it is very plain; it makes men seldom care to converse with any but those of their own opinion, which is the way to establish error, and to propagate it for ever. There is a difference between beating a man with the truth, and endeavouring to convince him of it; and between raising his passions to oppose it, and preparing them to receive it. This is the true end of conversation, though the other is too often the use of it; and the mischief is sufficiently great, if we only consider what a stubbornness in opinion men contract by being so unreasonably provoked. But there is still a farther mischief; when men truly labour to promote truth, and recommend

it to others, they always place it in its best light, and take care to obviate the misapprehensions of those they deal with; but where they enter into a question merely for opposition sake, or for the pleasure of exposing somebody else, they care not how little he understands the truth, or how grossly he mistakes; for the more violence and passion he shews against it, the greater the entertainment; and therefore, instead of obviating his doubts, stumblingblocks are laid in his way, and the thing is painted industriously in such colours as are known to be most offensive to him; and what is the consequence? He for ever takes his measure of your opinion from this representation of it, and goes away persuaded that you could not answer the objections, which you would not: you have your entertainment for the present, and he his error, it is probable, for ever. And is not this wilfully to expose our good to be evil spoken of, and, for the sake of an ill-natured diversion, to sacrifice the interest of truth and religion?

The same effect is often seen to proceed from a mixture of zeal and ignorance: in this case men often judge it absolutely necessary to do or say the things they approve, when they are before those who they know do not approve them; they look upon it to be asserting the truth, and to do otherwise, in their opinion, is deserting it. This was something of the case which the apostle had before him when he wrote the words of the text. The question in the church of Rome was concerning the lawful or unlawful use of meats

forbidden in the law of Moses: those who held it lawful to use them were never more zealous of their liberty, or more certain to make use of it, than when they met at table with those of another opinion: this gave rise to many scandals and offences. The apostle, who allowed the use of all meats indifferently, disapproved this perverse uncharitable use of them, and, among many other reasons, gave this as one, *Let not your good be evil spoken of.* But to proceed:

Sometimes men expose their good to be evil spoken of out of pure pride and haughtiness of temper: this is the case when men have such a contempt for the world as not to think it worth their while to guard against the misapprehensions of those about them. They reckon it below their dignity to render any account of what they do, and a mark of guilt to descend so low as to justify their actions. But surely, if we estimate the thing fairly, it is betraying of that which is good to reproach, and laying of stumblingblocks in the way of the blind. The very reason why you despise the world, and disdain to give any account to it of what you do, because the world is weak and captious, and below a wise man's notice, is the reason why you ought to endeavour to satisfy it. This rule of the apostle's has its rise from the weakness of men, and the very end of it is to direct us how to walk with respect to those who are weak, and unable to judge of things so perfectly as we do. Do but read the first verse of the next chapter, in which the apostle sums up the advice he had given, and

you will see that the apostle lays his foundation in the known or supposed weakness of men: "We then," says he, "that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." And when he advises us not to let our good be evil spoken of, what else is it but to advise us to guard against the weakness and misapprehensions of men? He knew surely that good could not be liable to be evil spoken of, but by being misunderstood, and therefore he can mean nothing else in this charge but that we should condescend to the weakness of others, and keep our good out of the way of being misunderstood by them.

How much below a wise man you may think this conduct I cannot say, but I am sure it is not below a good man, who will think nothing below him that tends to the honour and advancement of virtue, and nothing more does so than to justify virtue and goodness in the eyes of the world. Things are capable of very different constructions, and all men cannot equally judge of the consequences and tendencies of opinions and actions; and therefore it is a duty owing to yourself, your neighbour, and the truth, to fence your actions and principles against the misapprehensions of weak minds. Your own reputation, your neighbour's satisfaction, and the honour of truth, are equally concerned, and equally demand this justice at your hands.

Nor is any man, how great soever he is, above rendering an account of himself to the world. It is not true magnanimity or greatness of soul that

makes men averse to it; but a narrow-spirited insolence and pride that possesses them, and teaches them to place their glory not so much in the worthiness of their actions, as in despising and contemning every body else. A generous virtue is open and free, harbours no ill designs, and therefore fears no discovery, and never appears more truly glorious than when it is most truly understood: it loves the light, because its deeds are good, and is always ready to render an account of itself, because it can always render a good one. Were this openness and plainness more practised in the world, perhaps it might prevent a great deal of that hatred and animosity which are founded in mutual jealousies and suspicions: I imagine this would be the consequence, because I verily believe that few men intend half the mischief that they are suspected of.

There are other instances to be given in which men expose their good to be evil spoken of: When a man sacrifices truth and honour to interest, and basely deserts the cause which he approves, truth itself often suffers, and others think there was but little in the profession, since so little appears in action: but in this and the like cases men may be more properly said to expose themselves to be evil spoken of than their good; for the world is generally so quicksighted as to know that such treachery is to be charged not upon the cause but the man. These instances therefore do not so immediately belong to the present subject: I proceed now to the last particular, which is to shew,

Thirdly, That as it is often in our power to prevent our good from being evil spoken of, so in many cases it is our duty.

This duty may, I think, be deduced from these principles; the honour of God and of truth, the charity that is owing to our brethren, and the justice that is due to ourselves.

The honour of God is chiefly consulted by reconciling men's minds to the love of virtue and religion, by removing their prejudices, and gently drawing their affections to the cause of goodness: this is the most substantial honour we can pay our Maker, to *exalt his name among the people, and teach every tongue to confess his truth.* It is certain men can never love the thing they speak evil of, and therefore the first step to make men in love with virtue is to remove out of their way all possible offences, to do nothing, not even that which is good, out of contention, which is the way to elevate the passions, and depress the judgment, and blind men from seeing and acknowledging the truth. In all human actions the passions and affections will have a share, and therefore it is necessary to court them by all fair means even in the cause of virtue; and what honester method can be taken than to secure our good from being evil spoken of? Good ought not to be evil spoken of, and therefore ought not to be exposed to the hazard of it without necessity. An indiscreet good man often does a great deal of mischief in the world, and raises an opposition to the good which he meant to recommend: our Saviour therefore, as a necessary qualification

for preaching the gospel, exhorts his disciples *to be wise as serpents, and innocent as doves*. Innocence is of absolute necessity in a preacher of righteousness: some degree of wisdom cannot well be spared; the greater the degree is, the more effectually will it secure its innocence, and recommend it to the imitation of the world. A great many men are judged to want the innocence of the dove, when indeed they want nothing but some of the wisdom of the serpent; and men are suspected of very evil designs, and black intentions, when indeed their hearts are free from malice, and their indiscretion is their only fault. This shews, however, how necessary it is, in order to promote the honour of God and religion, always to walk by this rule, and to take care *that our good be not evil spoken of*.

It will appear likewise to be a part of that charity which is owing to our neighbour: we know how much our happiness depends upon approving that which is good; *without holiness no man shall see God*. Ought we not then to labour to recommend virtue and religion to his choice, to render it acceptable in his sight, and by that means lead him to taste the fruit of the tree of life? And how is this to be done? Not by rendering our good odious and offensive to him; not by making it matter of reproach and scandal to him; but by setting it forth in its native gentleness, without scandal or offence, that he may be ashamed of nothing but that he did not sooner love and embrace it. Thus must the salvation of mankind be set forward: *Ha tibi*

erunt artes: Let ignorance and superstition triumph in reproach, supported by wilfulness and haughty pride; but let truth rejoice in meekness, and become all things to all men, that it may gain some. But, farther,

It is a piece of justice that we owe to ourselves and our own character to render our good irreproachable: when our good suffers, we must suffer with it, and partake in the reproaches that fall on it; and therefore it is prudence, with respect even to our own interest and credit, to avoid giving offence as much as possible. It is matter of doubt whether it be justifiable in the good we do to have regard to our own reputation: to make it the end of what we do is certainly bad, for the applause of the world is not the end of religion; but a good man is capable of doing so much good by having a good reputation, that it is certainly his duty to consult his credit and character in what he does: for this reason he ought to restrain himself in those freedoms which, in the judgment of the world, are unbecoming his character, though in themselves they be innocent and harmless. But surely there cannot be a more innocent way of aspiring to a reputation than taking care that our good be not evil spoken of, than in providing against the mistakes and misinterpretations that others may make of what we do; and therefore this argument in this case may justly be allowed its full weight.

And thus you see of what great moment it is to render our good unsuspected and free from

reproach; it is the way to advance our own credit to consult the good of our neighbour, and to promote the honour and glory of God.

This prudent behaviour is not inconsistent with a steady and constant adherence to the truth; for the truth is not to be deserted that it may not be evil spoken of, but it is to be practised without offence.

In matters essential to religion there is no room for compliance, and in matters of Christian liberty there is hardly any room for denying it. Where we are free, the greatest deference is to be paid to the opinions, nay, even to the prejudices of others. This distinction is not of my own making, but we have the exception and the rule from the same hand; for the apostle, in the verse after the text, adds, *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.* Take the whole of the apostle's admonition together, and you will easily perceive the meaning of these words. The dispute was about the lawfulness of meats: *I know,* says the apostle, *and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself:— But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably:* that is, I allow it is lawful for you to eat, but yet if you eat with the offence of your brother you offend against charity. *Let not then,* says he, *your good be evil spoken of: for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.* This being the case, forbear eating when eating will give offence; for it is not necessary to your gospel obedience, or to the establishing of the kingdom of God, that you should eat;

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for it is a matter of Christian liberty, and you may act which way you please. From which it is plain, that in matters that are necessary to the establishing the kingdom of heaven, we are not at the same liberty to please and humour men; for the reason the apostle gives in this case, why it ought to be done is, that the kingdom of God consisted not in it; which is by implication an exception to the rule, and amounts to saying, This advice which I give you, of forbearing things which are offensive, extends only to matters of Christian liberty; for where the kingdom of God is concerned, you must be content to follow Christ, and us his apostles, *through good report, and evil report.*

DISCOURSE VII.

NUMBERS xxiii. 10.

*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my
last end be like his.*

THERE is something very affecting in these words, and apt to engage us upon the first hearing to become parties to the good with contained in them. Whatever our present thoughts, views, and inclinations are, yet when our eyes are called off from the prospects of the world, and fixed upon the last point of life, and we stand as it were beholding ourselves under the arrest of death, and just ready to expire, we want no arguments to direct our choice to what is best for ourselves. These circumstances carry conviction with them, and how indisposed soever we are to live the life of the righteous, we are willing to die his death, and that *our last end should be like his.*

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There is a comparison implied in the words of the text between the case of the wicked and the case of the righteous, which the mind readily supplies. The comparison is stated under such circumstances as throw out all prejudices and partialities, and bring only the merits of the cause on both sides into judgment. You are called upon to behold the wicked and the righteous, both at the point of death, and to say which condition you would chuse for yourself. In this view, the pleasures and allurements of the world on one side, the supposed difficulties and hardships on the other, are equally set aside; virtue and vice are brought naked to the bar, clothed only in their own natural features, without colour or disguise, and being thus placed before you, your judgment is desired. We have no exceptions to take in behalf of virtue to any judge: let the most corrupt give sentence, yet corruption shall not prevail, but virtue shall be justified out of the sinner's mouth, whilst he *wishes to die the death of the righteous, and that his last end may be like his.*

It may seem, perhaps, that we have but little confidence in the cause of virtue under all other circumstances and conditions of life, when we defer the judgment to the last moments, and bring the wicked and the righteous to the very doors of death, before we venture to ask your opinion upon their several conditions. It may be thought unfair too so to state the case as to exclude all the pleasures and enjoyments on one side, all the difficulties and discouragements

on the other, which are the very considerations that are known to weigh most with the generality of mankind, and to leave nothing but the prospect, whether certain or uncertain, of a future state, when every thing is removed out of the contrary scale, which might serve, as in experience we find they do serve at other times, to balance against such hopes and fears. It may be said too, that it is no very great commendation to virtue, that men should prefer the hopes it offers to the fears of iniquity, when all contest is over in other respects, and at a time when nothing is left but mere hope and fear; for who would not prefer the most uncertain chance of being happy to the least degree of fear of being miserable, or even to the thoughts of falling into silence and perpetual sleep?

Were these exceptions well founded, it would take much from the weight of the comparison laid before us in the text; but the truth is, that there is no time or circumstance of life in which virtue may not bear being compared with vice, the passions and prejudices and corruptions of mankind being moved out of the question.

The words of the text, in their first and most natural sense, lead us to compare the wicked and the righteous, not only in their latest hours, but in the whole course and circumstances of their life; they arise from the contemplation of the happiness and prosperity of the people of Israel, and their future greatness and security in the land of promise, compared with the misery of the idolatrous nations, given up to sin and super-

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stitution, and therefore devoted to ruin. "The
 " people," says the prophetier, " shall dwell
 " alone, and shall not be reckoned among the
 " nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob,
 " and the number of the fourth part of Israel?
 " *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let*
 " *my last end be like his.*" And in the next chap-
 ter, " When he looked on Amalek, he took up
 " his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of
 " the nations; but his latter-end shall be, that
 " he perish for ever."

These two places help to expound each other;
 for, as the prophecy relating to Amalek was
 completed in the temporal destruction of that
 people, so by parity of reason the prophecy con-
 cerning Israel imported the temporal happiness
 of that nation. It was denounced against Ama-
 lek, *that he should perish for ever*; that he should
 be cut off, and leave no posterity behind him;
 but to Israel a long continuance of great increase
 is promised: *Who can count the dust of Jacob, and*
the number of the fourth part of Israel?

If we add to this the remark of the learned
 Bishop Patrick, that the original words, which
 our translators render, *Let my last end be like his*,
 may be properly rendered, *Let my posterity be*
like his, it will give us farther reason to acknow-
 ledge that temporal prosperity was not excluded
 from the prophetier's thoughts, but was con-
 tained in his wish, as the peculiar lot and inheri-
 tance of the righteous.

The other sense of the words, which looks
 beyond the limits of this world, and considers the

wicked and the righteous distinguished by their merits in another state of life, has of ancient times been ascribed to the text: nor need we be much concerned to determine between the two expositions, since both fairly arise from the words before us, both are agreeable to the apprehensions, and, as far as experience teaches, to the experience of mankind, and both have a foundation in reason and nature.

That *righteousness exalteth a nation*, that *sin is not only a reproach*, but also a weakening, to any people, are truths so universally received, as to want no proof. All lawgivers, in all times, have thought so, and made it their business to cultivate virtue and justice; temperance and frugality, and to discourage the contrary vices. Philosophers and moralists have been of the same opinion, and have taught with one consent, that the virtue of the people is the stability of all governments, and the true source of public prosperity. Practice and experience have, in all ages, answered to the truth of these speculations. If we consult the memoirs of the most renowned nations which have made a figure in the world, we shall find that they rose to greatness by virtue, and sunk into nothing through vice; that they got dominion by their temperance and probity of manners, and a serious regard to religion; and that when they grew dissolute, luxurious, and despisers of religion, they became slaves to their neighbours, whom they were no longer worthy to govern.

Besides the natural tendency which there is in virtue to make nations great and happy, there is this farther to be considered: If we believe the being of a God, and have just notions of his attributes, and think him at all concerned in the government of this world which he made, we must necessarily conclude, that virtuous nations are his peculiar care, and under his immediate protection; that he counsels their counsellors, and teaches their senators wisdom; that he goes forth with their armies, and covers them in the day of battle, and brings them home crowned with victory and peace.

Notwithstanding the general consent of men to this truth, that virtue is the true foundation of the happiness and prosperity of public societies, yet they differ much in opinion and practice in the choice and pursuit of happiness for themselves; and yet there is no doubt but that the same thing which is necessary to the happiness of a kingdom is also necessary to the happiness of private families and private men; unless we can suppose that the body politic may be in a very flourishing condition, whilst every member of it is in misery and distress. As a nation cannot be said to be healthy, when the private families of which it consists are visited with plague and pestilence, so neither can it be said to be rich and happy when the members are poor and miserable: from whence it follows, that whatever is necessary to the public happiness is necessary also to the private happiness of particulars, con-

sidered in themselves, and in the more contracted relations of life.

Since then we have the express consent of all men, that virtue is the true way to public happiness, we have, in consequence, their confession, that private happiness must be obtained in the same method: how is it then that men are so inconsistent with themselves, as in their own case to prefer the momentary pleasures of vice to the solid happiness which arises from virtue? How come they to think that the same thing which will make all others miserable will make them happy?

This difference arises not from the nature of the things under consideration, which continue always the same without alteration, but from the passions of men, which in one case are excluded, and admitted in the other with all their force to bias the judgment. When we consider what is good for other men, their passions have no weight upon our understandings, and we deliberate calmly what is right for them; but when we consider for ourselves, all our passions are awakened, and often prove too strong for our reason and understanding. The people are happy, you say, who are observers of justice, temperance, and chastity. Very well: and why would it not be as happy for you to observe the same rule as it is for them? Can reason, do you think; shew a difference in the case? No: but when a man judges for himself, he can lay aside his reason, and give himself up to his passions and corrupt inclinations. It is a common observation,

that it is much easier to give good instructions than to follow them, and there is much truth in the observation; but this ought to be no prejudice in the cause of virtue; for when a man speaks reason at the same time that he acts against it, he ought to be taken as a strong witness for the truth.

A reason may be demanded, perhaps, why we prefer the judgment of a man when he chuses happiness for others, to the judgment he makes when he chuses for himself. Do we not know that men are always truest to themselves, and never more sincere than when their own interest and happiness are concerned? Should a number of men consent to a law for suppressing vice and immorality, and yet indulge themselves in the very enjoyments which they forbid to others; whatever we may think of their opinion concerning the expediency of virtue to the public, yet we must not suppose them to judge that life may be rendered comfortable and happy by the practice of virtue, since such an opinion would be utterly inconsistent with the measures which they pursue in order to their own happiness.

But if this way of arguing is allowed, there is but one law for man and for beasts: reason makes no difference in the case; for the happiness of both consists in the mere gratifications of sense: a conclusion so absurd, that there is no man unreasonable enough to embrace it. When a sickly and vitiated appetite craves unwholesome food; who is in the right? the patient, who is eager to gratify his appetite, or the

physician, who stands between him and the deadly experiment, and prescribes safer, though less grateful remedies? The case is the same in the comparison between virtue and vice. The sensual man has a continual fever upon him; and we can no more judge what will render a man truly happy, by observing the choice he makes for himself, than we can learn the true cure of a disease by observing the cravings of a distempered appetite. If sense only is to be judge of the true measures of human happiness, in vain is it that we have reason given us for our direction; it can serve only to increase our shame; for a brute without reason is a much more honourable creature than a brute with it.

But we have no reason to decline the comparison between the pleasures of vice and the calm enjoyments of virtue: let us therefore take a nearer view of the two conditions, and see whether there be not reason to wish that we may live the life of the righteous, as well as to die his death.

As to the good things of life, the wicked can make out no peculiar title to them. Riches and honours may be held and enjoyed by the righteous as well as the wicked: they differ indeed extremely in the use they make of the good things of the world; and this being the only difference in this respect, the only question in this view is, Whether a man is happier in the enjoyment of a large fortune, when he applies it to the purposes, and uses it within the bounds of virtue, or when he makes it subservient to all

the ends and pleasures of vice? Or if you remove the fortune out of the case, and carry the comparison into another condition of life, the question then will be, Whether the difficulties of life, which attend upon mean circumstances, are more tolerable to a virtuous or a vicious man; and which of the two can produce the best supports against the outward evils common to both?

If we allow the vicious man to have a greater share of sensual gratifications, we allow him at once all the advantage he can claim for himself; and since he best knows how pleasant such enjoyments are, let him set his own value upon them. But though we allow him to rate his own pleasures according to his own lust and relish of them, yet his taste will not enable him to judge of the happiness or unhappiness of those who deny themselves the same liberties. It is the virtuous man's business not only to abstain from the pleasures of vice, but to subdue the passions of it; and when he has done so, he renders himself capable of much nobler enjoyments, which are a perpetual fund of delight and satisfaction to his mind. So that take the men in conjunction with their desires and appetites, and there is reason to believe, that, even with respect to the present enjoyments of life, virtue has infinitely the advantage over vice.

But if we look into the consequences of their different ways of living, such consequences only I mean as a little time produces, and makes manifest to the eyes of the world, the case will grow

to be very clear. View the persons in themselves: on one side you may see health and vigour attending upon virtue; on the other, pains and diseases following close at the heels of vice. But if you look still nearer, and examine their states of mind, the difference will appear yet greater: on one side you may see an undisturbed reason, surrounded with a constant calm serenity, and enjoying itself in all the prospects that are presented to it by things past, present, and to come; on the other side are disturbed imaginations, eager desires, perpetual uneasiness, reflections half stifled, and a mind ever labouring with unpleasant thoughts of the time past, and the more unwelcome prospects of the time to come. These are natural and constant effects, and such they are, surely in which the happiness of human life is very much concerned. You may value the pleasures of the body as you please, and despise the better part, the mind; but you are a reasonable creature whether you will or no, and your reason will have the last influence in making you either happy or miserable. If you lay in matter for uneasy thoughts and reflections, it is but storing up misery for yourself, a misery from which all the real or fancied goods of the world cannot deliver you. The pains of the mind are never ceasing torments: the wounds of the body may be cured, but for the wounds of the spirit the world affords no salve; they will fester and grow desperate, till they waste both body and mind. The truest touchstone by which we can prove the things which are condu-

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cise to our happiness, is to consider how they will operate upon our minds for the remainder of our life: for instance, you have an opportunity of getting some great advantage by doing some vile thing; whilst you look only at the advantage, and think over all the ways in which it may be serviceable to your pleasure or ambition, so long the temptation may be strong; but set it at a little distance from you, and the case will be altered. Suppose the thing done, and the advantage gained, and then put yourself in a posture of looking back on the whole transaction, and see what comfort will arise from the reflection. Can you rejoice in the sight of woods and parks, if every sight of them must call to your mind an innocent man, whom you ruined in order to obtain them? Such a thought must ever be attended with a secret abhorrence of ourselves: and how happy the man is who lives under a continual displeasure with himself, let any one judge.

This secret displeasure which wicked men conceive against themselves is inconsistent with any real enjoyment: so that sin lays the foundation of misery, and lays it so close to us that we can never remove it. Add to this, that vice renders men odious and contemptible, not only to themselves, but to all the world besides. There is so much sense of virtue left, and will be, as long as men continue to be reasonable creatures, that whether we like it for ourselves or no, we must needs like it for all others; and therefore a vicious man will always be a contemptible man, a circumstance that will always make him an un-

happy man; for it is impossible for a man to bear contempt easily, when he knows that he deserves it. So that consider the wicked man as he stands with regard to himself and his own judgment, and as he stands with regard to the world and the common opinion of mankind, and in both views he seems given up to misery, and to be the object of his own and the common hatred.

But there is still another scene to be opened, which will present us with a larger prospect, and show us far greater miseries in reserve for the wicked. Hitherto we have considered his case with respect only to this world and the natural effects of his vice; but ask him, and he will tell you, that this is but an imperfect description of his condition; that he has other fears about him, and such forebodings of future misery as are sufficient to poison all the pleasures of life, were they free from all other corruption. He sees that in this life all things come to an end, that the wicked and the righteous equally go down to the grave; but what new distinctions may arise hereafter, answerable to the natural hopes and fears of the mind, he hates to remember, and yet has it not in his power to forget. These thoughts are his perpetual plague: no sooner is a passion satisfied, and the pleasure over, but it appears again in a ghastly form, and speaks to him in the language of Israel's king, *Knew, that for all these things God will call thee into judgment.*

Say, however, and it is all that the wicked have to say, that such imaginations may be delu-

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five, and such fears may be vain: but yet, weak as you suppose these fears to be, we must be much weaker than we are before we can get rid of them; that is, we must lose our reason and understanding, before we can forget that there is a God who will judge the world in righteousness. These are natural thoughts, the plain result of that reason which is born with us, and; be they true or be they false, they have a real effect upon our present happiness; and if they are true, as I trust we shall all one day be convinced that they are, they will add eternity to the misery of the wicked.

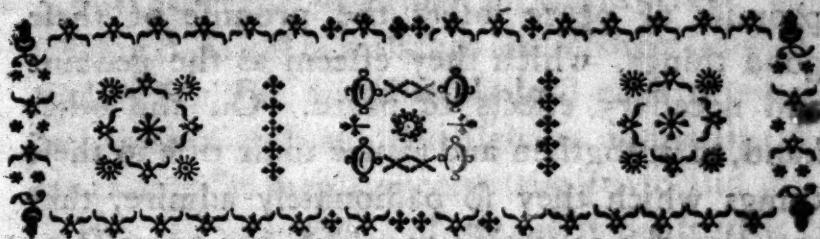
We meet sometimes with such hardened sinners as are proof for many years against all considerations of this sort; but their hardness is no security to them against the misery of these natural reflections: vice will soon impair their strength, and bring down the pride of their hearts; at least, time will bring them within sight of the grave; and when weakness and infirmities lay hold on them, or death draws near to execute his commission, they awake as one out of a dream, and their long-silenced fears begin to speak with double terror. And what a condition is a man in when there is nothing past that he can reflect on without self-condemnation, nothing to come that he can contemplate without horror and distraction of mind? Enquire of him in this condition, what profit there is in the pleasures of vice? Ask him, whether the fears of futurity are all idle dreams? and as you like his answer, follow his example.

It is a vain attempt to describe the misery of a sinner, who lyes expiring with all his senses about him: the imagination cannot furnish ideas strong enough to paint out this scene of woe, and the experience of it may we never know!

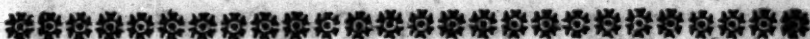
There is in all men a natural aversion to death; the best are not free from it: but this is an evil that has its remedy. Thought and reflection will furnish us with many arguments to balance against this fear: a trust in God, and a comfortable expectation of an happy futurity, will enable us to perform the last act with applause, and to give up ourselves with courage and with joy into the hands of our Redeemer. By these supports the righteous man, after a life of solid comfort, may find comfort too in his death, and wait with patience and tranquillity for that summons which he trusts and believes will call him to perpetual joys.

Could we but rightly balance this difference between the wicked and the righteous in their latest hours, it would sufficiently determine which has made the happier choice. But take the whole together; consider the wicked man in his life and in his death, how he lives despised by himself, and contemned by the world, without thinking of God, or thinking of him with dread, and at last expires under the utmost torments and agonies of mind, and we shall feel great reason to join in the petition of the text, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*

It is a vain attempt to describe the reality of a
thing, who are trying to do so. The imagination cannot follow the truth
enough to form an idea of what it is, and the
experience of it may we never know!
There is a great deal of reason in this;
the best are not free from it; but this is an evil
that has its remedy. Theology and religion will
furnish us with many arguments to balance against
this fear: a trust in God, and a comfortable ex-
pectation of an happy future, will enable us to
perform the best and most agreeable, and to give
up ourselves with courage and with joy into the
hands of our Redeemer. If these supports the
righteous man, after a life of solid comfort, may
and comfort too in his death, and wait with pa-
tience and tranquillity for that glorious which
the truth and believer will collect in personal
joy.
Could we but rightly balance this difference
between the wicked and the righteous in their
fate, we should still more firmly believe which
has made the proper choice. But take the whole
together: consider the wicked man in his life
and in his death; how he lives despised by his
kind, and condemned by the world, without thank-
ing of God, or thinking of him with regard, and
at last expires under the most intense and
agonies of mind, and we shall find great reason
to join in the portion of the just, and to leave the
fate of the righteous, and let us try to be
like him.



DISCOURSE IX.



PSALM CXIX. 165.

Great peace have they which love thy law.

IN expounding this and such like passages of scripture, and in applying them to themselves, men are apt to commit two great mistakes, which, though they are of a very different kind, in their consequences are equally fatal and pernicious. On one hand, they think they can never sufficiently enlarge the promise of the text, or build too great expectations upon the assurances of peace that are given to them; easily suffering themselves to be persuaded, that under the general name of peace is to be comprehended whatever the world calls good: and because the peace which they most affect, and which most strongly possesses their imaginations, is that which the world supposes to be placed in power and affluence, in an easy fortune, and an healthy body, they fondly conclude, that the

promise of peace infers the promise of these good things, which they esteem as the genuine and necessary effects of peace. On the other hand, to strengthen and secure their title to these things which they so passionately admire, they consider the condition to which the promise of peace is annexed in quite a different view. Here all their force is employed to limit and restrain, and to expound away the rigour of this article, and to shew upon how easy terms, upon how small a portion of righteousness and obedience a man may be numbered with those who love the law of God, and to whom the assurances of peace are given. Under this head they make very reasonable allowances to themselves, upon account of the great perfection of the law, which renders it extremely hard to practise, upon account of their own weakness and infirmities, through which they can hardly avoid often mistaking, and often offending against the law, and upon account of the mercy of God, which will incline him to overlook their errors, and to accept their general good meaning, and their imperfect performance, for righteousness and holiness. After these deductions are made in the proportion that best pleases them, and that best suits their own condition, they can, without difficulty, find themselves to be within the articles of the peace which the text promises, and then they are in eager expectation of being put into the possession of those good things, to which they think they have so well made out their title.

But as error naturally produces error and falsehood, so these mistakes are in their kind exceeding fruitful, and directly lead men to misapprehensions of God, themselves, and religion; for as long as men conceive the peace and prosperity of the world, and the enjoyments of it to be the necessary attendants upon virtue and holiness, they will be apt to judge of their own attainments in religion, and of the favour of God towards them, according to the measure of the good things which they enjoy in this life; which can serve only to fill rich men and prosperous men with spiritual pride and presumption, whilst they esteem their fortune as the reward of their virtue, and poor men and miserable men with desponding fears and horrors of mind, whilst they look upon their misery to be their punishment, and the sure forerunner of their condemnation.

As to the kind allowances which men make to their own vices and imperfections, whilst they labour to crowd into the number of those who love the law, I need not say of what pernicious consequence they are: if men are once persuaded that little religion will serve their turn, a little shall serve it: it is not likely that those who take pains to convince themselves and others, that a small degree of righteousness is sufficient for all the ends of religion, should be so little of a piece with themselves as to take pains to obtain more than what they judge to be necessary. So that these candid interpretations of the conditions of religion seem to lead to as candid a compliance

with the modes and fashions of the world, and the same good inclinations which tempt men to expound away one half of their duty, will as easily tempt them to forget or neglect the other.

To avoid these inconveniences then, it is necessary to consider,

First, The nature of the peace here spoken of in the text.

Secondly, Who they are that may be said to *love the law of God*. And,

Thirdly, To illustrate and confirm the truth of this proposition, *Great peace have they which love thy law*.

First, then, It is necessary to consider the nature of the peace here spoken of in the text.

It is plain the Psalmist makes this observation upon the experience of his own circumstances and condition, and the many trials he had of the favour and protection of God; and yet to come at this conclusion he does not set forth the great state and splendor of his kingdom, or the triumphs and glories of his reign, or describe any circumstances of the outward and worldly prosperity he enjoyed, which yet he ought to have done, had he intended to infer that worldly peace and security, and an exemption from the pains and evils of life, were the never-failing blessings and reward of holiness and obedience. His life, perhaps, offered as ample matter to build such an observation on as any man's whatever: he was, by the special appointment of Providence, drawn out of obscurity, and raised to the throne of Israel; his life, often attempted by men, was

as often guarded by Heaven; and the dangers to which he was exposed served but to convince him how much he was the care of the Almighty. When prosperity weakened his virtue, and at last betrayed him into the crying sins of murder and adultery, he suffered not only under the lashes of a guilty conscience, and the torments of a wounded spirit, but was humbled likewise under the afflicting hand of Providence: his glory was darkened, and his afflictions were many and sore. Upon his repentance the clouds again dispersed, and he grew happy as he grew obedient. Thus it seemed good to God to deal with him; but so far is the Psalmist from considering these circumstances of outward glory, and making a general rule from his own case, that in the text he regards only that peace which he felt and enjoyed during the course of his afflictions and persecutions, which peace he found was the undivided companion of faith and obedience in all, even the most afflicting circumstances of life. Do but mind what steps he takes to come at the conclusion of the text: he sets out with describing the evil-treatment he met with in the world; "Princes," says he, "have persecuted me without a cause." In the next place, he declares what it was that sustained him under these persecutions: "But my heart," says he, "standeth in awe of thy word: I rejoice at thy word as one that findeth great spoil: I hate and abhor lying; but thy law do I love. Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments." This love of the law of God,

this constancy in the discharge of his duty, he found was a perpetual spring of joy and comfort in his mind, amidst all the varieties and unpromising circumstances of life: and this leads him to sing the triumphs of virtue and religion in this exalted strain, *Great peace have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.*

From hence it is evident that nothing was more distant from the Psalmist's thoughts than to promise outward peace or temporal prosperity to the practice of virtue, since he speaks of that peace only which the righteous enjoy in the day of their affliction: and for this reason he adds, *and nothing shall offend them*; which would have been very improperly added, had he spoken of temporal peace before, in which there is nothing apt to offend any man; and therefore not to be offended at it is no peculiar prerogative, or just distinction of the righteous man's tranquillity. But to enjoy a peace which sets us above the power of evil, which places us out of the reach of fortune, which inspires us with courage in the midst of danger, which opens our eyes to look through the gloomiest scenes of sorrow to the blessed hope of future glory, which establishes our hearts in a patient expectation of God's deliverance, so that nothing can terrify or dismay us, is that which the world can never give, and which can only proceed from the blessed Spirit of God, whose province it is to confirm the faithful to the end, and so to arm their faith, that *nothing can offend them.*

This is that peace of which the Psalmist speaks,

and which is the peculiar lot and inheritance of the righteous, of him who loveth the law of God. Great is the gift, and happy is the man who can attain to it; but it requires pains and labour, and a constant watchfulness over ourselves, to prepare our heart to receive so noble a guest: for, as long as we carry this flesh and blood about us, and have the affections and appetites of it to incite us to evil, the solicitations of pleasure to move us to worldly enjoyments, the temptations of honour and interest to shake our integrity, so long it must be difficult to us to resign our wills to the conduct of the law of God, and entirely to love what entirely thwarts the bent and inclination of our corrupt nature; for it is not enough so only to love the law as to approve and admire it, and to pursue the righteousness of it with faint desires and distant wishes, which is such a love as every self-condemned sinner has for it; but our love must be active and fruitful in the works of the law, and satisfied with nothing less than the possession and enjoyment of the holiness and righteousness which the law prescribes. And this will more fully appear under the second head; which was,

To consider who they are who may be said to *love the law of God*.

In this psalm we often find holy David declaring how much he loved the law of God: "In thy law," says he, "is my delight; I have chosen thy precepts. My soul hath kept thy testimonies, and I love them exceedingly. I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above

"fine gold: I trust in thy word: I have hoped
 "in thy judgments:" And many other like expressions, full of regard and affection to the laws of God occur frequently. David, then loved the law of God; may we therefore, from his character, safely draw the picture of a man who loves the law of God? By no means; for tho' at the time of penning this psalm his heart was right with God, yet at other times he had highly provoked and grievously offended him. David was a different man at different times; and when he was a lover of the law of God, he heartily condemned and lamented what he was before, and blessed God for visiting him with such afflictions as served to awaken his conscience, and make him see and forsake the errors of his ways. Thus, in this very psalm, he confesses, "Before
 "I was afflicted I went astray;" and immediately after, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes:" And soon after he acknowledges the mercy and goodness of God to him in afflicting him, "I know,
 "O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and
 "that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." What therefore David in himself condemned when he loved the law of God, cannot be thought to be consistent with the character of one who loves the law of God. It is a vain and imaginary comfort therefore which sinners raise to themselves out of the worst part of the character of David, and other holy men, endeavouring, by their example, partly to defend, and partly to excuse their sins. There is a comfort indeed which

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sinners may draw from hence: these examples are a great encouragement to repentance, and the forsaking of sin, since here they may see how readily God embraced the returning prodigal: from hence they may hope, that though their sins be red as scarlet, yet shall they be washed white as snow; though they, like David, are grievous sinners, yet, like him, may they become lovers and beloved of God, if, like him, they repent and condemn their iniquities. This is the instruction which the scriptures hold forth to us in these examples; but as long as men make use of them to soothe and flatter their consciences in the quiet enjoyment of sin, so long do they abuse the goodness and mercy of God in setting forth to us these instances of his patience and long-suffering towards sinners.

But though the example of David in all parts of it is no safe direction to us, yet his inspired writings are; and we need go no farther than this psalm for the righteous man's character: In the very beginning of it he describes him to be a man "undefiled in the way, who walks in the law of the Lord, who keeps his testimonies, and seeks him with the whole heart, who does no iniquity." In speaking of himself, the first good thing he found to say was his repentance; this was his first step towards becoming a lover of God: "I thought," says he, "on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies: I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." His next step was to forsake his wicked companions, and to associate

with such as feared the Lord: "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts." The resolutions he had formed of persevering in holiness he thus expresses, "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always unto the end." In the verses before the text, and where he is describing that sense of religion which was the source of all the peace and joy which he found amidst his bitterest persecutions and afflictions, and which afterwards, in the words of the text, he comprehends under the general term of loving the law, he thus speaks: "My heart standeth in awe of thy word: I rejoice at thy words: I hate and abhor lying: seven times a day do I praise thee."

You see then what firm resolutions of obedience, how constant a perseverance in holiness, how regular and frequent acts of devotion, how irreconcilable an hatred to sin and wickedness, must meet together to complete the character of the man who loves the law of God. To hate and abhor sin, to love and delight in the law of God, are expressions which imply no small degree of perfection: they suppose the main difficulties of religion to be conquered, the struggle with sin to be over, the passions and affections to be subdued to holiness and obedience, and a man's heart to be in the interest of virtue, and to lead the way to all the good he does. There are some who, upon different views, such as are suggested merely by fear, or by interest, or present

conveniency, kept out of sin, and make a tolerable shew in the performance of the duties of religion: but, alas! their work is labour and sorrow; they have no pleasure or relish in what they are about; and are so far from tasting the peace which the Psalmist speaks of, that religion is their toil and slavery, the work of a master whom they cannot love, and whom they dare not anger, and whom therefore they serve unwillingly, without chearfulness or delight. These are they who are fond of every pretence which may help to ease them of any part of their duty; whose hearts are perpetually pleading the cause of sin, and inventing and maintaining all the excuses which may in any wise serve to cover and protect it: whereas they who delight in the law of God, whose hearts are seasoned with an honest undesigning virtue, want not to be excused from the work they take pleasure in. They who hate and abhor sin want not to have the approaches to it made easy, or cleared from dangers, since they have no appetite to embrace the monster, which is their aversion.

Hence it is that St John, in one of his epistles, has given this mark to know whether we love God or no, *His commandments are not grievous*. If we like the work, and take pleasure in obedience, it is the best evidence that we love the Master; but it is not to be thought that we love him as long as we hate and repine at his service. And this connection between the love of the law and the love of God was evidently in the Psalmist's view, since he affirms of one what, properly

speaking, belongs to the other: for the peace and joy which good men feel arise from the love of God, from a sure trust and confidence in his favour, from an unshaken hope of inheriting his promises, if they faint not when they are tried: it is this only which can make them triumph in the evil which virtue exposes them to, which can give them peace amidst all the tumults of the world, and preserve the harmony of their souls when all things are out of course, and maintain the tranquillity of their minds even whilst nature is dissolving in them.

It is not to be imagined that when the Psalmist penned the text his thoughts were no higher exalted than to a stoical rapture in praise of virtue; or that he fetched his comfort from such uncertain, such disputed principles: no; his mind was fixed on God, *from whom cometh our salvation*, and in whom alone the faithful have peace and rest for evermore. This is the foundation he builds upon, as will appear,

Thirdly, Where we are to illustrate and confirm the truth of this proposition, *Great peace have they which love thy law*.

How little peace and satisfaction of mind the enjoyments of the world afford, every man in his own condition knows, what pleasures or comforts soever he may imagine there are in the conditions of life which are above him, and which he has never experienced: so that, allowing men to judge as far as their knowledge extends, (which is but a reasonable confinement), there is but one opinion concerning the pleasures

of the world, which men of all ranks and degrees consent in, That there is no lasting peace to be had from them, no security in them against sorrow and vexation, no comfort under present evils, nor any assurance against future. But were there that enjoyment in all conditions which most men think there is in some, yet still it would be very imperfect, and liable to frequent interruptions, unless supported by hopes of religion: for as long as men continue to be of the same nature which they now are, so long their minds will be ever looking forward beyond the limits of this world, and foreboding to them the good or evil that attends them hereafter, when they shall be stripped of all their present supports and possessions. The pleasures of this life cannot sustain the spirit of a man against these apprehensions, but must lose their own heat by degrees, from the continual damps which will arise from such reflections.

So that let the world be as valuable as it will, we dispute it not with you, yet something else is wanting to give peace to the mind, something that can calm the fears, and raise the hopes for futurity; and this nothing but religion can do, which entitles us to his protection, before whom things past, present, and to come, bow down and obey. If we have the assurance of his love and favour to us, nothing can disturb us; we stand upon a rock against which the winds and waves may spend their fury, but shall spend it in vain, for it is immoveable. This assurance of God's favour is but one and the same thing with what

we call a good conscience; for what force is there in a good conscience to give us peace but only this, that it is our testimony that we have faithfully and diligently served our God, which is the ground of our hope and confidence in him? And when we are thus armed, and can without reserve profess, *I have loved thy law, O God, and my delight hath been therein*, we shall be superior to all the evils of life. The very circumstances which give terror to the worldly man, and fill his breast with horror, will give ease and comfort to us. When he thinks of the shortness of his life, and the speedy account he must give to God, his blood retires to his heart, and hardly there maintains its post: but when the good man's thoughts are so fixed, his heart springs with joy, and all his hopes begin to bloom: the prospect of that blessed day so fills his mind, and engages all his thought, that he is lost in pleasure and delight, and forgets all the pains and calamities of life: not the tyrant's frown, nor the executioner who waits for blood, can rob him of his peace; he looks on them as messengers sent by Providence to deliver him from his pain, and to carry him to the haven of his rest, where his soul longs to be. This, this only was the art by which the saints and martyrs overcame the world, and looked upon racks and gibbets, and every form of death, but as so many doors opening into the kingdom of rest and glory. By the same art still do good men triumph under all the trials of fortune; by this they preserve their peace in their latest hours, and resign with joy their spirits into his hand who gave them.

This is a trial which mortals must undergo: the time will come, and is now at hand, when we must part with all that our eyes delight to see, and when we must go to render an account to our great Judge; in that day where shall we look for comfort, and whom shall we call to our assistance? Your parting friends will have nothing but tears and sighs to lend you: then happy is the man whose trust hath been in God, who can with patience, full of hope, wait the coming of his Lord, and observe with comfort the degrees by which he hastens to his end. It is worth your while to lay the foundation of this peace betimes, that you may be able to look that day in the face, at which, even at a distance, the stoutest heart may tremble; for it is not courage, but folly, not to think of death with some concern, since so much depends from that moment.

And were we sure of nothing else in consequence of our faith and obedience, but to slip quietly out of the world, without suffering the agonies which guilty sinners feel, and which none can describe, yet still our labour would not be quite in vain: but since this peace is but the forerunner of eternal peace, the earnest of future glory and immortality, it is worth all our pains to deny ourselves in this world, to take up our cross and follow Christ, to labour to do the whole will of God, that we may inherit that peace which belongs to those, and those only, *who love the law of God.*

DISCOURSE XL. 193

This is a trial which mortals must undergo: the time will come, and is now at hand, when we must part with all that our eyes delight to see; and when we must go to render an account to our great Judge; in that day where shall we look for comfort, and whom shall we call to our assistance? Your parting friends will have nothing but tears and sighs to lend you: then happy is the man whose trust hath been in God, who can with patience, full of hope, wait the coming of his Lord, and observe with comfort the degrees by which he hastens to his end. It is worth your while to lay the foundation of this peace betimes; that you may be able to look that day in the face, as which, even at a distance, the soul itself heart may worship: for it is not courage, but folly, not to think of death with some concern, and were we without nothing else in contemplation of our faith and obedience, but to strip quietly out of the world without suffering the agonies which guilt manifests, and which none can describe, yet still our labour would not be quite in vain: but since this peace is but the forerunner of eternal peace, the cancel of future glory and immortality, it is worth all our pains to deny ourselves in this world, to take up our cross and follow Christ, to labour for do the whole will of God, that we may inherit that peace which belongs to those and theirs only who love the law of God, and have no other object in view.

DISCOURSE X.

PSALM CXIX. 63.

*I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and
of them that keep thy precepts.*

THERE is nothing more useful or necessary in the pursuit of virtue and holiness, and indeed in the whole conduct of our lives, than to observe the rules and methods by which men of approved righteousness, who are set forth to us as patterns and examples in holy scripture, did attain to that perfection, which made them the shining lights of the world, and the declared favourites of God. If therefore we look into such examples, and from thence draw rules for our own use, we shall be sure of two very great advantages, namely, that the rules we prescribe ourselves will be both proper and practicable; practicable, because drawn from the practice of men like ourselves, and

proper, because we aim at no other end than that which good men before us have attained to by the use of these very means, and, consequently, for the attaining of which these rules have already by experience been found to be proper.

This division of the cxixth psalm from which the text is taken, sets before us the several steps by which David recovered himself from the sin in which he had been involved. In the first verse he declares his choice, *Thou art my portion, O Lord;* and his resolution to pursue that choice, *I have said that I would keep thy word.* This he knew by sad experience that he was not able to do without the assistance and support of God, and therefore the next step was to apply for his assistance, *I entreated thy favour with my whole heart.* Having thus prepared himself, he set diligently to examine his heart, and to form resolutions, and immediately to put those resolutions into practice: *I thought on my ways: I turned my feet unto thy testimonies: I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.* This was a good beginning, and these very promising resolutions; but to secure them there was need of patience and courage, and faith towards God. The way that leads to life is narrow, and beset with dangers, and we begin in vain, unless we are prepared to endure hardship like good soldiers of Christ. The next thing therefore he mentions, and which we are to learn from him, is steadfastness when we are tried: *The bands of the wicked,* says he, *have robbed me; but I have*

not forgotten thy law. He then resolves on a constant and uninterrupted devotion towards God; *At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments.* After this follow the words of the text, *I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.*

At first sight this seems to be but a little thing to mention, after so many great attainments spoken of before: after he had remembered his holy resolutions, his immediate and uninterrupted pursuit of them, his constancy and steadiness under affliction, his perpetual devotions, what should lead him to fall so low as to add, that he was careful to keep good company? What else could lead him to it but his own experience, which had taught him, that this care was the great preservative of all his other attainments, without which they would soon waste away, and leave him once more an easy prey to the soft allurements of vice? He knew and had felt how great the contagion of ill company was, and therefore, with reason, adds, in the last place, that which was his greatest care, the avoiding the society of wicked and voluptuous men; a snare in which he had once already almost perished, and in which he had been entirely lost, had not God sent his afflicting angel to terrify and awaken his conscience, which was stupified with sensual pleasures, and sleeping the sleep of death. So sensible was the holy Psalmist of this danger, that he not only resolved for himself to avoid it, but made it his early care to forewarn

his son of it: and such impressions did the repeated admonitions of his father make upon the mind of Solomon, that in the book of Proverbs, when he comes to mention this necessary advice of shunning the company of wicked and evil men, he no longer speaks in his own person, but, being full of the image of his father, when he delivered the instruction, introduces him giving the advice to him his son: "Hear, ye children," says he, "the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding: for I was my father's son, tender and only-beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words; keep my commandments, and live." And soon after follows, among his father's precepts, this: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men: avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

But what need is there, you will say, to look far for this advice, since it is of all others the most obvious, and an instruction which all parents give to their children as well as David? It is true, they do; and for that reason it is commonly looked on as advice fit only for children; and young people hardly think themselves men till they have broke loose from all restraints of this kind, and shewn the world that they are at liberty to chuse the worst of company for themselves, without being called to an account for it. And this weak ambition of shewing themselves to be men, and at their own disposal, every day betrays youth into such hands as ly in wait either

for their souls or their estates; as if the only way they had to convince the world that they are in their own power, were to do that for themselves which every body knows no friend would do for them.

But, to remove this prejudice against the advice implied in the text, I desire you would consider, that though David gave this instruction betimes to his son, yet he himself, in his more advanced years, and under his greatest improvements in virtue and holiness, thought fit to lay it down for himself as a rule to be observed in the conduct of his life, as a great security to his virtue, and defence of his innocence and integrity. *Depart from me, says he, ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God, &c. 115.* He hardly thought it practicable to associate with evil doers, and yet to keep the commandments of God, as is plain from the reason he gives, why he would have the evil depart from him, *For, says he, I will keep the commandments of my God;* which would be no reason, were there not a moral impossibility of keeping the commandments of God without departing from evil doers. As long as men are in a state of trial, that is, as long as they are in this life, they cannot arrive at such a pitch of perfection as may make it safe for them to expose themselves unnecessarily to the temptations of vice, and to the greatest of temptations, the constant insinuations of wicked men. The reasonableness of the Psalmist's practice described in the text, and of the rule therein implied, must be deduced from the consideration

of the great danger of the contrary practice, in keeping ill company, and from the great advantage of contracting friendships with the good.

But, before I enter into this argument, I must observe to you, that none are concerned in it but such as have a sense of religion, and a due regard to virtue, for these are the two things in danger from ill company; and it is certain, that such as have no regard either to virtue or religion are not within the reach of any arguments drawn from the dangers which threaten them. Upon this topic therefore I can only speak to such as have the awe of God, and a sense of their duty upon their minds; and such I hope it will not be hard to convince of the great danger there is in contracting friendships and familiarities with men who have prostituted their minds and their bodies to the service of sin. For,

First, Let it be considered, that no resolutions which we can form to ourselves of keeping clear from the pollutions of the company we keep can give us any security of preserving our innocence and virtue: such resolutions are often carried into bad company, but seldom or never come off whole; for when the foundation upon which such resolutions stand is undermined, they must necessarily fall to ruin. You resolve against sin, because you have a sense of the heinousness of it, and the evil consequences which attend it; but it is great odds but this wears off by constantly conversing with such as have learned to make a mock of sin, and can talk of their own and others' vices with a great deal of humour and

raillery. When once you come to relish this subject, and to find sport and entertainment in that which ought to give you horror and aversion, it is but an easy step to practise what you thus far approve; and when once you are giving way, and inclining to yield to the solicitations of vice, your evil genius will soon furnish you with many excuses, and many suggestions to encourage you. It will be no hard matter for you to imagine that your fears are the mere prejudices of education; and the example of your friends, who sin and fear not, will strengthen the imagination, and your heart, your treacherous heart will say to you, Behold they sin, and no evil happeneth unto them. Thus seduced, and thus betrayed, you are left an easy prey to sin; your resolutions fall before the prevailing influences of Pleasure, in the arms of which you fall asleep, perhaps never more to wake again to your sense and reason till the last trumpet calls you, with all your sins, to stand before the judgment-seat of God. But farther,

Secondly, Suppose all these unhappy circumstances should not meet to push on and complete your ruin, yet even the opportunities and advantages for sin, which an ill acquaintance affords, are of themselves great temptations. Men are not always alike upon their guard; their virtue is not at all times equally strong; and it is the happiness of good men, who are unacquainted with the ways of wickedness, that in their weakest state, when they are most tried with temptations, they want the skill and knowledge of sinning.

This guard you certainly lose to your virtue and innocence, by entering the societies of wicked men: they will always be ready to second your temptations, and make the way to sin easy and practicable: they will, as far as in them lyes, prevent the preventing grace of God, and rob you of the benefit of it; they will watch your weakest hours, that they may triumph in your fall, and have the malicious pleasure of seeing you become like one of them. Were I subject to sudden and violent efforts of passion, I would not venture myself in a man's company who I knew would clap a sword or a pistol into my hand in the height of my rage, and rejoice to see the mischief and extravagance of my fury: but this is the very choice which every man makes for himself, when he courts the friendship and acquaintance of wicked men. You are a man subject to passions and temptations; you have inclinations to evil, which you are not always sure of controlling; whenever they attack you, your best refuge is to reason, and thought, and prayer: why then will you put yourself into such hands, which you know will never suffer you to enjoy these advantages; which will leave you no time to think, but will drive you on to follow the present evil passion, till it raises a flame that will consume and destroy you?

Thirdly, It is on all hands acknowledged that there are many difficulties in the practice of religion, even when we call in all the assistance, and take all the advantages that may be had; and, in the nature of the thing, it is necessary it should

be so, since we are called here to a state of trial, to give proof of our virtue and faith, and ready submission to the will of God; in doing of which, if there were no difficulty there would be no trial. Now, whoever considers this, and that upon the consequence of this trial our hopes, our happiness, ourselves depend, must needs think it extreme folly in any man who shall refuse any helps that may be had towards making his work easy to him, or who shall voluntarily expose himself to any difficulties that may render the issue of his trial more doubtful and uncertain: and this every man confessedly does, who lays himself open to the art, and cunning, and deadly insinuations of evil men, who are industrious in the bad cause they serve, and, as the wise King expresses it, "They sleep not except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall. They eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence." And if you partake in the bread and the wine, it will not be long before you take share in the wickedness and violence that procure them; for that which you esteem perhaps the most innocent employment of your companions, their living in splendor, and in all the delicacy of profuseness, and spending their time in luxurious ease and forgetfulness, leads naturally to all other excesses of vice and lewdness; for when the fulness of meat and drink has driven out thought and care, in the room of them there springs up a blind brutal courage, which neither fears God nor regards man.

Even this sensual indulgence, distinct from the mischievous consequences that attend it, is that which will expose us to the wrath and judgment of God: *Riotous persons and drunkards* are numbered with those who *shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*. It is a crime that is heightened by a kind of self-murder, destroying the man which was formed after the image and likeness of God, divesting him of sense and reason, and every thing else that was to distinguish him from the beasts of the field, and leaving him even in a worse condition than they, a mere helpless and useless carcass. What a life does that man lead who wastes half his time in thinking only how he may be without thought the rest of the day! whose short mornings are spent in contriving the excesses of the night, and his waking hours employed in preparing himself for a new lethargy, and the sleep of intemperance!

Should you therefore only propose to share these enjoyments with the libertines, and to keep a strict hand upon yourself as to all other kinds and degrees of wickedness, yet even this is destructive of the hopes of religion. If you bring but a taste and relish with you for these pleasures, use and custom and example will soon make you a proficient; and you will wonder, perhaps, when it is too late, to find yourself lost in such excesses as you never once thought of looking into. Your cheerful nights and the heavy mornings which follow them, will indispose you for thought and reflection, and the sense of religion, which lives and is nourished

only by the exercise of thought and reason, will gradually decay: the comforts of an innocent mind, which used to warm your soul with delight, and make it spring forth with joy into the contemplations of God and of futurity, will all forsake and leave you, and in the room of them will succeed misgiving fears and doubts full of mistrust, evil suggestions, and jealous apprehensions of God and of yourself, till at last you are forced to fly for refuge to those repeated acts of intemperance, which at first you only tasted as transient diversions. And when once this comes to be the case, that you are afraid of yourself and your own thoughts, and forced to fly from the presence of your own mind, nothing can save you but the more than ordinary grace of God, which whether you will deserve or no, you yourself shall judge.

But the mercies of God are without measure, and, like the sun, *rise upon the evil and the good, on the just and the unjust*: perhaps, then, he will look down on you, and awaken you once more to see your danger, and the evil of your ways. This is the best thing which can befall you: but could you be sure of this, there is no encouragement in it to enter into the societies of wicked and profligate men; for, alas! you little think what misery, even upon this supposition, you are preparing for yourself; for when you are immersed in sensuality, the gentle and the kind calls of the Spirit will not awaken you: rougher methods are grown necessary, because your sense of feeling is too far gone to be affected with soft

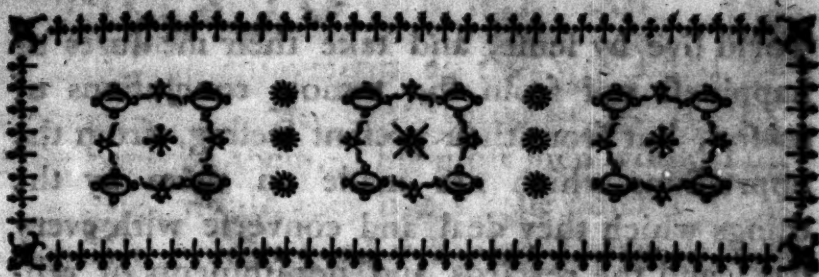
ones; fire and sharp knives can only reach the feeling of a man grown stupid in a lethargy or an apoplectic fit, and therefore they only must be applied. In spiritual distempers the same method is used by the wisdom of God. How was David called back to himself? By grievous afflictions and heavy judgments; by uncommon misfortunes, which only could raise him to see his wretched state: and is it worth our while, for any pleasures of sin, to make it necessary for God to send misery and affliction to dwell with us, to bring ourselves into so desperate a condition as to want so desperate a remedy?

And yet the external evils and afflictions which by these means we shall call down upon ourselves, will be but one part, and a light part of our misery: for when we come with eyes open to see the danger of our condition, to behold hell gaping wide to receive us, and that there is nothing to keep us from present ruin but the slender thread of life upon which we hang, what fears, what torment, nay, what despair will possess our minds? When we look back upon the course we have run, and see with unprejudiced eyes the wickedness we have committed; when we number the nights and days spent in the service of sin, the injuries done to men, and the indignities offered to God, where shall we begin to repent, or with what courage shall we set about a work which seems too large to be compassed in the little time we have left ourselves to work in? And when we do begin, how unpleasant must the work be to us? With what confusion shall

we lift up to Heaven our offending hands and eyes? with what tremblings of heart implore the mercy we have long despised, and petition for that grace which often perhaps we have ridiculed, and set up to be a sport for fools? Believe me, there is great difference in the religious work of an innocent, virtuous man, and of a returning sinner; and you cannot make a worse bargain for yourself than to sin upon the prospect of repentance: no pleasures can recompence you for the change you make. To approach the throne of God with filial confidence and joy, and to appear before it with the fear of self-condemned criminals, are very different states. None but those who have felt the sinner's pains, the remorse and anguish of mind which attend him in every step, can truly judge of this matter: and from such experience God defend us all!

Upon the whole then, since the danger of associating with wicked men is so evidently great; since we hazard nothing less by it than ourselves, our immortal souls, and all our hopes of future glory; and since, though we should recover from their snare, the consequences as to this world abound with certain pain and misery, and as to the next but with uncertain hopes, let us with holy David set ourselves to shun this danger, and with him resolve *to be companions of them who fear the Lord, and keep his precepts.*

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 this state, the consequences as to this world
 abound with bodily pain and misery, and as to
 the next, but with utter ruin. Let us with
 holy David importunately beseech thee, O Lord,
 with him relative to the redemption of Israel, and
 that the Lord will be true to his promise.



DISCOURSE XI.

PART I.

2 CORINTHIANS IV. 18.

For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

THE motives to obedience in all religions are thus far the same, that they depend upon the belief of another invifible world, and the different ftate and condition of good and bad men in it. For though it has been maintained with fome fhew of reafon, that virtue is its own reward, and that man's chief happinefs would confift in the practice of it, though there were no other rewards annexed to it; yet this, fupposing it to be true, is by much too narrow a foundation to build religion on; for this could influence only men of abftracted thought and reafon, who are in comparifon a very inconfiderable part of mankind. The generality of the

world live by sense, and take their measures of happiness not from the remote conclusions of reason, but from their present feeling, from the impressions which are made on them by the things which they deal and converse with every day; and the rewards and punishments of religion are calculated to this sense and feeling, excepting only that they are distant, and not capable of being made the present objects of sense; for the punishments denounced in the gospel against the unrighteousness of men, are such as nature recoils at, such as, according to the sense the world has of misery and pain, are insupportable evils, and the only reason why they operate so weakly on the minds and affections of men is this, *that they are not seen*. The same may be said of the rewards of the gospel: they contain the very happiness that Nature thirsts after, which is life and pleasure for evermore: but neither can our eyes see these rewards; and therefore they fall short of raising men to that degree of virtue and holiness which in reason they ought to do.

The advantage which the things of this world have in this respect is not to be dissimbled: they play and sport before the senses: the man of thought and reflection cannot but see them, and the man of no thought sees nothing else. This advantage the apostle seems to acknowledge, by styling the things of this world *the things which are seen*, and the rewards of the gospel *the things which are not seen*. In this lyes all the force and strength of worldly temptations and pleasures;

for were the enjoyments of this world and the next equally remote, there could be no competition between them. This most men would find to be true, would they but a little observe what passes in themselves and others. There are few but would be well content that that part of their life which is past and gone had been spent in virtue and sobriety; they find no comfort in recollecting the lewd frolics and extravagant vices of their youth, yet still they cannot resist the present temptations of pleasure, but go on adding to the account of their folly and sin. And is not this a decision of the question? does not reason determine against the world and the enjoyments of it? and is it not mere sense that turns the scale of the world's side? If it be true now that you do wisely in preferring the pleasures of life to the hopes and expectations of futurity, it will then be true fifty years hence, that you did wisely in chusing this world, and renouncing the pretences to heaven; for truth is always the same: and yet if you live to see that time, it is great odds but that you judge otherwise, and condemn yourself of folly and indiscretion for all your past vices and sinful pleasures. This is a judgment which we see men make every day; they pursue the things which are present, but no sooner are they gone but they condemn themselves, wishing they could recall the time, that they might apply it to better purposes. And whence arises this difference, but from hence, that in one case reason is excluded by sense and the prevailing power of present objects, but in

the other case is free and unrestrained, and judges from the truth and nature of things? Throw out sense and appetite, and let the cause be heard at the bar of Reason, and the question then between *the things which are seen* and *the things which are not seen* will be reduced to these two points:

First, Whether we can have such sufficient evidence for the existence of the things not seen as may make them capable of being brought into competition with the things which are seen, the existence of which, in this question, is out of doubt?

Secondly, Whether the value of *the things that are not seen* be so great, that we ought in prudence to forgo the enjoyment of *the things which are present with us*?

There are several ways by which we satisfy ourselves of the existence of things without us; the chief of these is sense. This evidence extends to this world and the things of it: and though some have taken great pains to doubt of the existence of things which they saw and felt, yet it may well be questioned whether ever any man did indeed arrive to that perfection of scepticism? This evidence may be styled the strongest in one respect, as it most universally affects mankind, who much more readily receive the reports of sense than the conclusions of reason. Not but that the evidence of reason in some cases is altogether as strong and conclusive for the existence of things not seen, as sense is for the things which are seen. This is manifest in the proof

of a first Cause, where, from the visible works of creation, the being of an eternal Cause is proved to a demonstration, from such principles as sense and reason cannot resist. So likewise, from the testimony and credit of others, we arrive to a certainty of the existence of some things which they have seen, but we have not; which evidence is properly the evidence of faith, and may be so circumstantiated as to admit no doubt or scruple. Upon this evidence men act in their dearest concerns in this world, and are as well satisfied of the existence of some persons and places which they never saw, as they are of the persons and places they every day converse with. And from hence it follows, that it is no manner of proof or presumption that things do not exist because they are not seen, for there are several ways of being satisfied of the existence of things, and seeing them is but one way. Things which admit not of this proof may admit of another; therefore it is great weakness to suspect the reality and existence of things merely because we do not see them.

And yet the greatest piece of wisdom that the voluptuous man has to boast of is founded in this prejudice: he thinks it wisdom to be on the surest side, and not to part with a certainty for an uncertainty. The things of this world he sees and feels, and in renouncing them he is sure he renounces what might afford him certain pleasure and enjoyment: but he has not this notice nor evidence of future things; they ly out of the way of his senses, and therefore he looks

upon them to have much less of certainty in them than the present objects of life, and concludes very solidly, that it is best to make sure of something, and not to forego his present possession for the distant hope of enjoying the uncertain blessings of futurity. Now sense is the measure of his certainty, or else how comes he to take it for granted that there is more certainty of the things which are seen than of the things which are not seen? His senses only prove to him that he lives at present in this world, they cannot possibly prove to him that he shall not live hereafter in another. So that the evidence of sense reaches but to one side of the question, to assure him of his present being; and yet from this evidence he concludes in prejudice to the other world, which is very absurd, since the evidence of sense cannot, one way or other, affect the belief of future rewards and glories. Now, in all comparisons men ought to weigh the reasons on both sides; but the comparing and preferring visible things before invisible for the sake of the evidence of sense, is comparing and preferring one to another upon seeing only the reason of one side; for sense only extends to visible things, and has nothing to do with invisible; and therefore the judgment that men are apt hastily to make in this case, when brought to the test of reason, must appear to be groundless and precarious.

Since then, in the question between things visible and invisible, it is evident that sense can judge but of one side, it follows, that sense can

be no rule of judging in this dispute; for a rule must be the common measure of the things to be estimated, and applicable to both, but sense is applicable to sensible objects only, and therefore can be no rule in any question between the things that are, and the things that are not, the objects of sense.

Allow sense to prove, as strongly as you would have it, the existence of this world and the things of it; but how can that affect the belief of another world? The existence of this world will not prove that there is no other world: that you live now is no argument that you shall not live hereafter; and therefore the evidence of sense for this world ought to be no prejudice against the belief of another.

The advantage of this evidence of sense is great, because it is the first that men come to the use and application of, and by the constant and familiar use of it they learn to depend upon it, and trust to it in all cases. It is much later that men come to the use of reason; and this evidence of reason they have less occasion for, and still use it less than they have occasion; so that they are not equally acquainted with the certainty of this evidence as they are with the demonstrations of sense, and therefore are seldom so perfectly satisfied with the deductions of reason as with the reports of sense. This is the true state of the question between the evidence of sense and the evidence of reason, and the preference the world gives to the deductions of one and the other.

Now, if there can be no evidence for unseen things, which may be of equal weight with the evidence of sense, then indeed the things which are not seen can never be made so evident as to stand in competition with the things which are seen. But the means by which we arrive to the knowledge of things which we do not see, are reason and faith, and these may afford an evidence equal to the evidence of sense.

There are many things which can be known only from reason, which yet are as well received as any report of sense. We see many productions and works of nature every day, the cause of which is secret and remote, and not discoverable by the senses, and yet no man doubts but that all these effects have causes. You can no more suppose, against the evidence of your reason, that these things came into being without any cause, than you can suppose against the evidence of your senses that these things which you see have no being. Here then the evidence for the thing not seen is equal to the evidence for the thing seen. So then a thing's not being seen can be no prejudice or presumption against its existence, since some things which are not seen are capable of being demonstrated.

Hence it follows, that though the things of this world be always before our eyes, and we have no reason to doubt of their existence, and the things of the other world are at a distance and hid from us, yet this is no reason to prefer the things of this world before the things of another, since there is an evidence which extends

to things not seen, which is equal to the evidence of sense; and, for ought we know, this evidence may belong to these unseen things of another world; and if it does, then the things of another world, in point of certainty, stand upon an equal bottom with the things which are seen.

This makes it very unreasonable to take up with the enjoyments of this world as the surest and more certain enjoyments, and to suffer ourselves to be imposed on by our senses, and prejudiced in favour of present objects; because, till we have proved and examined the evidences for the things not seen, we cannot conclude that the things seen are more certain than they, since they are capable of being made as evident by other arguments as sensible objects are by the senses.

Another evidence for things not seen is faith, an evidence that the world in temporal affairs pays great respect to, however shy they are of admitting it for a principle of religion; for there is no man but who believes a great deal more concerning this world, and the affairs of it, upon the report made from other people's senses, than he does from his own. It is a narrow sphere that a man acts in, and his senses go but a very little farther than he himself goes; and a man's knowledge would be extremely confined, were he to know and believe nothing but what he saw and heard himself. Now, there are things in this world which all people believe to be in the world, and yet not one in ten thousand ever saw them. What evidence do they believe on

then? not on the evidence of sense; for these things never fell under their senses; but they believe on the report and credit of others, that is, upon the evidence of faith.

Here then is another evidence which the world cannot refuse to admit as good evidence for things not seen, since men believe upon this evidence the certainty of all those things in the world which themselves have not seen, that is, of most things in the world.

Now, this evidence, where it is perfect, that is, where there is a sufficient number of credible witnesses to the thing in question, falls very little short of the evidence of sense. You can observe, I believe, no difference that men make between many things which they take upon the credit of others, and the things which they receive from the information of their own senses; which shews that this kind of evidence may be so strong, as to leave no room for doubts or suspicions.

Now then, urge your objections against the things of another world that they are not seen, and therefore not to be preferred to the things of this world which are seen, where lyes the reason and sense of this argument? If the things of this world are seen, they have their proper evidence; if the things of the next world are not seen, they do not therefore want their proper evidence. If there be a sufficient evidence that is proper to them, and they have that evidence, they are not the worse for not being seen, that is, for not having that evidence which does not belong to them.

If then the things of another world, though they are such as eye hath not seen, are yet nevertheless capable of as good proof and evidence as things which are seen, it is extreme folly and want of thought and consideration, to pursue the objects of sense in opposition to things unseen, without well examining into the evidence and certainty of these unseen things. When we tell you, that for the glories and blessings of another life we have the certainty of reason and faith, you must needs own that we urge proper arguments; the nature of our proof you cannot suspect. If we have enough of reason, and enough of the evidence of faith, you must acknowledge our proof to be demonstrative, because it is a proof which in all other cases you admit for things not seen, reason and faith.

The things of another world may be objects of sense to those of the other world, and therefore are capable of having the evidence of eye-witnesses: nor should I easily be convinced of absurdity should I assert, that there may possibly be a communication between the two worlds. Suppose then one should come down from heaven, and report the state of things there, this would be an eye-witness, and the evidence exactly the same with that which you admit in other cases. He must give good proof indeed of his coming from heaven, and that in this case is supposed.

Consider farther, that this question concerning the future rewards and punishments of another life is not the first or principal question in reli-

gion; it supposes the belief and knowledge of God; for unless we believe the being of a God, who is the just Judge of the world, there is no room for this question of rewards and punishments. In this argument then the being of a God is presupposed, and a question then will arise, whether God can qualify men to be witnesses to the world of these unseen things? It is not to be denied but that God can, if he pleases, reveal these things to men; and were the world satisfied that God had indeed revealed such things to such and such men, they could not scruple admitting them as good witnesses in that case. It comes then to this point, Whether it be possible that men can give satisfaction to the world that God has indeed spoken to them? and if there be any one thing that you will agree God can do, and man cannot do, this will be no dispute: for should God do that thing by the man he appoints to be his witness, the hand of God working with him would be a full proof that he spoke by the voice of God, and declared not his own, but the things of God. And this would be a sufficient ground for our faith.

Since then these things are capable of such good evidence, it will be worth your while to enquire, whether they have it or no; and I suppose it will not be thought the effect of reason or wisdom to reject them unheard, and to follow the impression of sense and appetite at the hazard of being finally ruined and destroyed.

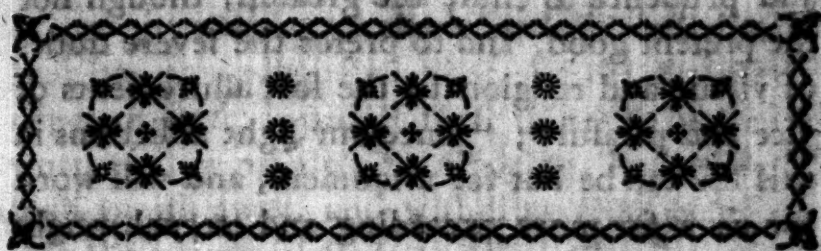
Every man who has eyes and ears is attached by the evidence of sense, and therefore it would

be strange if any man doubted of the things, the evidence of which is so continually thrust in at his eyes and ears. But to arrive at the evidence of reason and faith requires that we should exercise the faculties of our understanding, requires our diligence and attention; because these proofs are more remote, out of the common road, and are not to be had without seeking for.

This is a just account of the reason why most men act by the evidence of sense, and follow and admire the things of this world; and so few pursue, with any heart or zeal, the invisible things of another: not that the things of this world are in themselves more real or certain than the things of another world, but because men are sure and certain of the things of this world, not being able to exclude the impressions of them, and are dubious of the things of futurity, not being able to attend to the proofs of them.

But how well this becomes men of thought and education let any one judge; or what account they will be able to give of their neglect, in not so much as proving and trying the things which make for their salvation, is hard to say. Why should your eyes run away with your reason and understanding? If you had been to be directed merely by your eyes, God need not have given you the power of reflection; and since he has given you this ability, he will not excuse your resigning tamely to sense, which was given not to govern but to serve man. If the things of another world are capable of being proved, it concerns you to know whether they are proved or

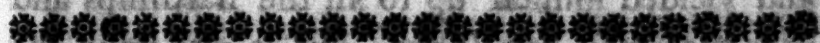
no, especially considering the vast disproportion there is between the things of this life and the next. The argument for present enjoyment is so far good, that in things of equal value a wise man would secure his share as soon as he could, and take the first opportunity of enjoying the happiness which would not improve by being stayed for: but here the case is very different: the things of this world are *seen* indeed, but that is all; no sooner are they seen but they are gone, and leave the man more restless after the fruition than he was before: but the things of futurity are of endless duration, and once enjoyed will never desert the possessor. And therefore it is worth a wise man's labour to restrain himself from the present allurements of life, to suspend his happiness for a time, which will so greatly increase by the delay, and pay such interest for the present self-denial which he exercises: *For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*



DISCOURSE XI.



PART II.



THE second thing to be enquired into is,
Whether the value of *the things which*
are not seen be so great, that we ought
in prudence to forego the enjoyment of *the things*
which are present with us.

There can be no ground or foundation to persuade men to renounce the pleasures of this life, and to expose themselves to the troubles and inconveniencies which often are the companions of virtue and holiness, in hopes of future glory and happiness, unless this future glory and happiness are so great and valuable as to recompence all the losses and sufferings which men must sustain in the pursuit of them. But if this be the case, if the rewards of Heaven are infinitely to be preferred to the things of this world, it will then be but agreeable to the common maxims of wisdom

and prudence to chuse the greatest, though not the present good, and to prefer the severe duties of virtue and religion to the soft allurements of vice and pleasure; "since our light afflictions in this life can be but for a moment, and will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And it is upon this principle that the apostle argues in the text, *For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* By this he justifies his own practice and behaviour: he suffered persecution gladly for the sake of Christ and his truth; he stript himself of all the comforts of this life, and yielded himself up to all the hardships and evils that man can suffer; but it was upon the prospect of future glory. He was not so dead to the sense of nature as to think the good things of this world worth nothing, or so void of feeling as to delight in ill usage: but he knew the value of the rewards for which he laboured, that they were so great as to justify the choice he made, of suffering for Christ's sake, rather than of enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season.

The apostle's argument is founded upon the different duration of the things of this world and the other. Now, it must be agreed, that we have the same evidence for the uncertain, and, at best, the short duration of the things of this life, as we have for the existence of them, that is, the evidence of sense. If the voluptuous man has this advantage, that in following after the things of this life he follows things which he sees, and by the evidence of every sense knows to

be real, it must be acknowledged that religion at least has this advantage, that, by the same evidence of sense, it proves these things to be scarce worth following after or enjoying, since they so soon vanish away, and withdraw from being either the objects of sense or of pleasure: so that, as to this part of the argument, the allowances must be equal on both sides. The men of this world have the certain evidence of sense for the reality of the things of this world, and that they do exist; but they must grant, on their part, that we have the same certain evidence of sense that these things will not long exist, but that both they and their enjoyments must shortly perish together.

Since this then is a clear case on both sides, and the principles are undisputed, let us take this part of the argument alone, and examine what are the conclusions of reason from this head, *that the things which are seen are temporal.*

To estimate the happiness of men we must take into the account the nature of his desires and inclinations, and the nature of those objects which he pursues. If there be such a due proportion between these two, that the object is capable of satisfying the desire, then the object obtained is capable of making a man happy. To be restless and uneasy, and still wanting something that we have not, will not, I suppose, be thought a good description of an happy life; and yet this must always be the case when our desires are fixed upon such objects as do not answer and correspond to them, but fall short of affording

such a pleasure as may fill and content the mind. Now, there are different passions and desires incident to man; these are not the same in all men, but vary according to the various tempers and habits of men, and depend upon the circumstances of youth and age, and the like: but these passions being so uncertain and mutable, cannot enter into this enquiry, which is after the natural happiness of man, which must be estimated by his natural and constant desires, and not by the sudden efforts of passion which he is liable to. Now, the most natural and constant desire of man is the desire of life; there is nothing Nature equally abhors with the thoughts of not being; but then the life of this world is but short and must end in death, and therefore the life of this world cannot be the adequate object of his desire, and consequently the life of this world can never make a man happy, because it does not answer to the natural desire, but leaves a man restless and uneasy, and in perpetual dread of his approaching dissolution.

Another natural and constant desire, which is grafted upon the former, and springs from it, is the desire of being happy, of being always happy, without suffering any interruption from sorrow or pain, or afflictions of any kind. Hence it comes that the fear of losing the thing we possess and enjoy is often a trouble equal to the pleasure of the possession, which shews that no possession that is not durable can fill and satisfy the mind of man; which evidently proves that the natural desire is the desire of perpetual uninterrupted

happiness; and if so, then nothing less than perpetual happiness can be the natural object of that desire, or make a man easy and happy. Now, whether the world affords such an happiness as this can be no question, since we have the evidence of sense and reason and experience to the contrary.

From hence it appears, that to place our happiness in this life, and the things of it, is at best to place our happiness where it can never be had. We can never possibly free ourselves from the natural desires of life and happiness. The atheist, who would ridicule the belief of another world, and a durable life after this, can never bring himself to say that it is better to die than to live for ever, and for ever happily: so that, at once retaining the desires of eternal life, and denying the possibility of such a life, he reduces himself to such a state as can afford no happiness; for to have desires which can never end in enjoyment for want of suitable objects, is to have desires only to make us miserable.

If then this world has nothing that can make us happy, nothing that can answer our natural desires and appetites, surely it cannot be the effect of wisdom or prudence to confine our enquiries after happiness to this world, where it is not to be had: so that the first conclusion of reason from this allowed principle, that *the things which are seen are temporal*, is this, that the things of this world being temporal, and our desires adapted to the fruition of things eternal, this world can never make us happy; the consequence of

which is, that we must seek out for another abiding place, if haply we may find it, where we may meet with objects suited to our desires, the only means by which we can ever arrive at complete and perfect happiness. So that the voice of Nature speaks the same language with our blessed Saviour, and calls out to us in his words: "Set not your affections on things below, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but set your affections on things above, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal:" that is, place not your desires on this world, which has nothing that can satisfy them; but place your desires above, where God has prepared an happiness answerable to the impressions he has given to the souls of men.

That the things which are seen are temporal, is indeed no sufficient proof that there are things which are not seen which are eternal, though it is a great presumption, that, since God has not fitted this world to our desires, he has fitted our desires to another world, and has not given us these cravings of nature merely to vex and torment us, without any possibility of their being satisfied: but thus far we prove, from the things of this world being temporal, that they cannot make us happy. And this makes religion to be a very serious concern, since all our hopes of happiness depend on it: for if religion cannot furnish objects adapted to our natural desires, nothing else can; and therefore men should

think soberly and maturely before they reject religion, and divest themselves of all the hopes they have, or can have, of being happy. Who would not be glad to live for ever, and to be for ever happy? Is it not then very unnatural to see a man rejoice and triumph in the thoughts that there is neither a life nor happiness which is eternal? It is indeed better not to be than to be miserable, and therefore the thoughts of dropping into everlasting silence and darkness may be the refuge of guilty fear, but never can be a natural joy or comfort to the soul of man, which longs for nothing so much as life for evermore. The only reason any man can possibly have to wish that there may be no other world is, that he may with the more freedom enjoy this; and this must needs appear to be a wise reason, if we consider the value of this world, and the worth of these things, which are no sooner seen but they are gone, and their place is no more found. I should not wonder, were this world to last for ever, to see men of low and abject spirits setting up their rest, and giving up the hopes of more exalted glory and happiness; but now, that the world must last but a little time, and we much less, to see men sacrifice their hopes of glory and immortality to the mean and poor enjoyments of this world, is such an absurdity as would puzzle any one to account for, who knew nothing more of man than that he is a reasonable creature. It is so little men gain by gaining this world, and so little they lose by losing it, that the concerns of this world would weigh

but light in this question, were not men guided more by the violence of passion than either by reason or the regular desires of nature.

For suppose, secondly, that religion were very uncertain, and a man were liable to be deceived in his expectations of future rewards, let us examine again by this rule, that *the things which are seen are temporal*, what the consequence of this mistake would be, and how much a man would be a sufferer by it. As to the ordinary course of the world, in which a man may profess his religion without disturbance or persecution, the pleasures which are consistent with innocence and virtue will be found to have more of real satisfaction than the vicious man can ever find from the gratification of his sensual desires and appetites. But we will wave this topic, because the text goes upon the supposition, that we must give up this world, and submit to many hardships and inconveniencies in it, in order to obtain the other; and at all times there is difficulty enough in submitting to the restraints of religion, till men have got to be masters of their own passions and appetites, and have learned to use this world as not abusing it.

Say then that a man loses the pleasures of this world in following after the pleasures of another, his loss must be valued according to the worth of the thing which is lost. Now, things of this world being very uncertain possessions, which are often hardly obtained, and seldom long preserved, the loss of these things cannot be set very high. It is evident that the men of the world

do not always succeed in their designs; they are liable to a thousand disappointments, which cut them short in their prospects, and render all their pains and labour abortive. Of the many who seek the honours and glory of this life, but a very small number attain to the end of their desires. Since then, to follow the world and the good things of it is no sure way of obtaining the world, it may happen, that he that pursues the glories of another world to the neglect of this, may lose just nothing at all; for, possibly, had he given himself up to this world, he might have got no share in it; for such is the mutable condition of these things, and so many chances they are liable to, that a man can have no security for all his pains and toil of enjoying the thing he pursues; and if by following the world he might possibly have got nothing, then possibly by not following the world he may lose nothing; for a man cannot be said to lose more than he might have got. And therefore in this question it is a great mistake to reckon up all the good things of this world together, and then to say, these things do we lose by religion; for if we had no religion, we should never be able to get the hundredth part of these fine things, and we cannot be said to relinquish more of the world than we might have got had we not relinquished it.

And now you may learn, from the nature of worldly possessions, and your own experience, what sort of chance a man has of being satisfied with the enjoyments of life, supposing him to

take the utmost pains for them: possibly he may never get them; for there are so many pretenders, that they are ever jostling one another out; and, possibly too, if he does get them, they may leave him before he has half done with them; or, it may be, when he has got them, he may not like or relish them; for many things which look well at a distance, and raise and inflame the desires, lose their value by being possessed, and appear to be, what in truth they are, empty and vain allurements. Now this chance for worldly happiness is all that a man quits for religion; for you cannot say that he quitted the good things of life, without knowing whether he ever could have had them or no. It is ten to one against you, that if you follow the world you get nothing, or but little, by it; and therefore there are the same odds on the other side, that if you follow religion you lose little or nothing by it. So that supposing religion to be uncertain, yet a man does not venture much for it, or put himself into a much worse condition than he was in before, by reason of the uncertain condition of the world.

And, on the other side, this may be said, that if religion reaches no farther than this life, yet one good effect of it here is evidently this, that it makes men easy and contented under the disappointments of this life; so that whatever the loss of the world may be to a worldly man, yet to a truly religious man it is inconsiderable, because he is not equally affected with such losses, being strengthened and confirmed against them by the

hopes he has entertained of more lasting and solid enjoyments. So that add this to the account, and it will appear, that religion in this world is the surest step you can take, if not towards happiness, yet towards ease and contentment; for, since so many who follow the world must necessarily be disappointed, by following the world we expose ourselves to all the uneasiness and pain of losing it; and, as things go, it is well if the pain and uneasiness of losing the world be not all we get by pursuing it. But religion is the art of governing and ruling the passions, of making ourselves easy without being gratified with the pleasures of this life; and when we are thus prepared, not to enjoy the pleasures is no great mischief. So that if there be no other world but this, yet by religion we are sure of getting the second best thing that can be had in the world, that is, contentment. Admit that the first thing is to have and enjoy the things we want, yet certainly the next best thing is to be easy without them. The first the world but rarely grants, the next religion never denies. And thus far we may argue from the nature of worldly things, without entering into the comparison between them and the things of another life, which extremely alters the state of the question, and makes it reasonable not only to forego the pleasures, but even to chuse and embrace the sorrows of life for the sake of future glory; *for the things which are not seen are eternal.*

As to the nature of the happiness of another life, we know but little of it; the descriptions

we meet with in scripture are figurative, and lead not to the true knowledge of the glories they describe. Possibly this world affords no notions or ideas proper to express the happiness of heaven, which can therefore only be described in figures taken from the present sense we have of pleasure and enjoyment. Hence the happiness of heaven is sometimes painted under the figure of a marriage-feast, which is a time usually stolen from sorrow, and dedicated to mirth and good-humour. Sometimes the description is grounded upon our notions of power and dignity, which are great darlings to mankind: hence we read of crowns of glory which cannot be shaken, which fade not away, which are reserved for us in the highest heavens. From hence we only argue, that the happiness is very great, and exceeding much the glories of this world, which are but faint images, and scarcely serve to represent the glories of heaven. But we have a clear notion of duration; and therefore to this point the scripture speaks plain, and tells us, that these are pleasures for evermore; that they are eternal and eternally the same without changing. Nothing likewise is more usual than to express the happiness of heaven by everlasting life; "Whosoever," says our Saviour, "believeth in me shall live, though he die; and whosoever believeth on me shall not die eternally." This then is the natural happiness of man, since it alone can answer the natural desires of man; for nothing less than eternal life can satisfy that desire of life which is implanted in man; and nothing can be more

evident to sense than this is to reason, that something has been from all eternity, and something shall be to all eternity: so that our desires of eternity are not loose ill-grounded desires; but there are evidently objects in nature fitted to them. Since then we cannot possibly live without desiring to live for ever, and to enjoy eternal happiness; since likewise it is clear to a demonstration that there are things eternal, is it not agreeable to the very instinct of nature to endeavour after these things which can only make for our happiness, if by any means we may attain to them? To lead us to the possession and enjoyment of these things is the work and business of religion; and therefore to be employed in the work of religion is to be employed in the work of Nature, which is to seek and pursue its own happiness and perfection.

¶ If religion is attended with difficulties, yet the glories we attain to through the means of religion are worth the purchase. What is there that can be had without pains and trouble? not even the present enjoyment of this life. Why then should we think much of being at some trouble to purchase the eternal things of heaven? We do not grudge it in less matters, in the matter of our earthly hopes and desires. We lose nothing by religion that we could possibly keep long without it: a good man can suffer only in this world, and were he not to suffer, yet the course of nature would soon part him and the world, and the enjoyments of it. And is it not worth our while to resign the things we cannot keep a

little the sooner, for the sake of that happiness which, once possessed, can never be taken from us, but, like our desires, will be ever fresh and new, not impaired by use, or palled by enjoyment?

It is wise to retire from the pleasures of the world, were it only to guard against this certain evil consequence, that if we follow the present things, to the neglect and contempt of future happiness, the time will certainly come when our present enjoyments will be past and gone, when things future will be growing apace to be the things present, and then we shall have nothing left but this evil thought to haunt us perpetually, that we have had our good things in this world, and must expect evil things in the world to come; that we have for the time past been comforted, but must for the time to come be tormented. As short-lived as men are, they often outlast the world, that is, the enjoyments of it; they live to be past the pleasures of it, and can have no comfort or ease by any sense. And is not a wicked man in a fine condition, when he has no enjoyment in this world, and no hopes in the next? Men in the youth and vigour of age, may overcome the troublesome thoughts of another world; they are capable of a constant succession of worldly pleasures, which may extinguish thought and consideration: but if they live to be deserted by sense to be exposed to thought and reflection, how dismal a prospect have they! how are they tormented with the thoughts of what

DISCOURSE XI. 239

is past ! and how do they dread the thoughts of what is to come !

And happy were it for them if their fears were to be their only torment ; but let their eyes but once be closed, and their fears must be succeeded by more than even their fears could suggest : the things future will then be the things present ; and this thought, that they are eternal, will exclude all glimmerings of hope or comfort, and leave them the prey of pain and of despair.

Let us then work whilst we have the day, for the night cometh when no man can work. This is the day, and, for ought we know, this only is the day of peace. Consider then the things which make for your salvation, and follow after them, for they lead to life and immortality.

DISCOURSE

is part of the whole, and the whole is part of the whole.

And happy were it for the world, if the whole were part of the whole.

to be made only for the whole, and the whole only for the whole.

once be closed, and the whole world be made for the whole.

by more than one, and the whole world be made for the whole.

the whole world be made for the whole, and the whole world be made for the whole.

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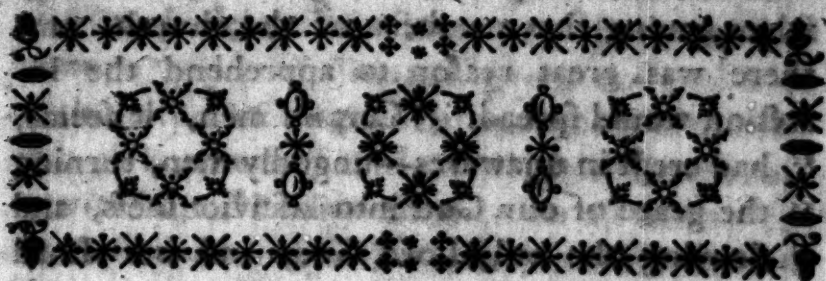
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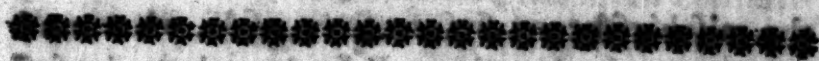
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DISCOURSE XII.



General Epistle of St JUDE, v. 3. latter part.

—It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

IT is at all times the duty of the pastors and ministers of the Christian church to call upon the people to be zealous to maintain, and by proper methods to propagate the faith of the gospel: but there are seasons in which it is more especially necessary for them to discharge this duty; seasons which require that the pastors should be vigilant to prevent, and the people careful to avoid the danger of growing errors and superstition.

Such was the season, and such the occasion of this epistle. Some very dangerous errors, and

some abominable practices, began to shew themselves among the members of the church, and there was great reason to apprehend the infection would spread. "Certain men," it seems, "had crept in unawares—ungodly men, turning " the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and " denying the only Lord God, and our Lord " Jesus Christ." This it was that made it needful for the apostle to exhort Christians every where to *contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

If it was needful in the apostles' times, when the mischief began first to shew itself, what must it be in ours, when this evil seems to be at its full growth, and to surround us in different shapes on every side? Superstition on one hand, and irreligion on the other, have left true Christians a narrow path to walk in: and though reason and reflection will make men sometimes sick of the extremes, yet the transition from one extreme to another is much easier than from either to the truth that lyes between them. From Popery to no religion, and from no religion to Popery, is a ready step; and when a man is tired of either extreme, it requires only a resolution to run away from it as fast as he can, to get soon to the other; whereas it requires a serious and a steady mind to stop at the right place.

Another difficulty there is which distinguishes our times from that of the apostles: St Jude complains, that some corrupt men, teaching perverse doctrines, had mixed with Christian societies,

but it was by stealth and unawares they had crept in: the churches themselves were pure and uncorrupt, and professed and taught the true faith of the gospel of Christ; but our case is far otherwise. There are, indeed, in all churches corrupt members, a calamity common to all times; but in these latter days the infection has spread so far, and so wide, that whole churches are tainted with it. The errors we have to contend with are not such as creep in silently and unawares, but such as are taught by authority, and insisted on as necessary conditions of Christian communion; they are pressed upon men by an application of all the promises of the gospel to those who receive them gladly, and of all the threats of the gospel to such as embrace them not. Is it not then now, more than ever, needful to exhort men to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints?*

But it is to little purpose to exhort men to be zealous for the Christian faith, unless you can give them some sure and certain mark to know what the right faith is. If you enquire of particular churches, or societies of Christians, which is the true faith, each of them will answer, that the faith professed by them is the true one, and that other societies have fallen into errors and mistakes. In this divided state of things, therefore, no church has a right to be believed on its own word merely, without giving a reason of the faith which is in them; and yet this pretence of authority is the only thing that can be said,

and therefore it always is said, to justify the dominion which the church of Rome has usurped over the faith of Christians. With how much better grace might St Jude have dictated to the Christians of his time, and told them, upon his own authority, what the true faith was, in opposition to corrupt teachers? But does he so? by no means: so far from it, that he gives them another rule to examine the faith by, and sends them to enquire what the faith was, which was once, or from the beginning, delivered to Christians.

Church authority is one of those unhappy subjects which is seldom seen but from one of its extremes. In some places, and with some persons, it can do every thing; in others it can do nothing. I cannot propose to consider justly so copious a subject in the compass of a sermon, and therefore I shall content myself with laying before you some observations on the apostolic rule in the text, which may be of use if duly considered. And,

First, Since an apostle of Christ, in the early days of the church, sent Christians to enquire after the faith delivered from the beginning, it follows manifestly, that the apostles themselves were but teachers and witnesses of the faith, and had no authority or commission to make new articles of faith. Had it been otherwise, how absurd was it in St Jude to send Christians to an enquiry after the faith *once delivered*, when he and they could not but know, that there was

a standing authority to make articles of faith, and that no such enquiry was wanting.

The truth of this conclusion may be abundantly proved, by considering the commission and authority the apostles received from Christ, and their conduct in the execution of them: "Go ye," says our blessed Lord, "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," Mark xvi. 15. The gospel then was the thing committed to them to be taught to the world, and not to be made or to be altered by them; which sense is delivered in terms more express in St Matthew, for there the words are, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," chap. xxviii. 20. The promise annexed, "And lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world," must be relative to their commission, and they could depend on it no longer than whilst they kept within the limits of their commission, which was to teach what Christ had commanded.

When the time of our Saviour's leaving the world drew near, he told his apostles, "he would not leave them comfortless, but pray the Father to send them another Comforter, to abide with them for ever," John xiv. 16. The office of this Comforter is described, v. 26. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." If then the office of the Spirit

was to *bring to their remembrance* what Christ had said to them, their office, as teachers, could only be to publish the doctrine of Christ. The Spirit was likewise to *teach them all things*, that is, to teach them to understand rightly all things, and to preserve them from mistaking the meaning of what our Lord said to them, which was frequently their case whilst they conversed with him on earth.

Let us consider, in the next place, the conduct of the apostles, and how they executed the commission with which they were intrusted.

One of the first things they did was to elect an apostle into the place of Judas. When they were to chuse an apostle, without doubt they considered the qualifications necessary to the office, and for that reason St Peter declared, that the choice was necessarily confined to such "as" "had companied with them all the time that the" "Lord Jesus went in and out among them, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the" "same day that he was taken up from us:" so that no man was capable of being an apostle, who was not capable of being a witness of the doctrines and works of our blessed Lord; a plain evidence that their business was to report the doctrines of Christ, and not to deliver doctrines of their own. Accordingly the four gospels, published to instruct the world in the Christian faith, are an history of what our Saviour did; taught, and suffered: and St Luke particularly tells us, that he wrote his gospel, "having had

“ perfect understanding of all things from the
 “ very first.” So that St Luke, in writing his
 gospel, followed the rule prescribed by St Jude,
 and reported *the faith once delivered to the
 saints.*

St John, in his first epistle general, refers
 likewise to the beginning and first revelation of
 the gospel to shew the authority of the doctrines
 which he delivered. Hear his own words: “ That
 “ which was from the beginning, which we have
 “ heard, which we have seen with our eyes,
 “ which we have looked upon, and our hands
 “ have handled of the word of life—that which
 “ we have seen and heard declare we unto you,
 “ that ye also may have fellowship with us.” St
 John’s referring in this manner to what he had
 heard and seen, to establish his authority as a
 preacher of the gospel, plainly shews, that he
 thought himself bound to preach only what he
 had heard and seen, and that he had no autho-
 rity to preach any other doctrine. It is obser-
 vable that St John, in the passage before us,
 says expressly, that he wrote the things he had
 heard and seen from the beginning, that those
 to whom his epistle came might “ have fellow-
 ship with the apostles;” a plain proof that a
 right of fellowship with the apostles, or, in other
 words, a right to church-communion, depends
 upon receiving and embracing *the faith once de-
 livered to the saints*, and not upon any other
 doctrines of later date, by what authority soever
 published or declared.

St Paul's case was a singular one: He was not called in our Saviour's lifetime, and consequently had not the qualification required in the first of the Acts, when a new apostle was to be chosen: he was not one of those who had "compained with the apostles during the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them;" but if we consider how this defect was supplied in his case, it will justify the observation we are upon in the strongest manner imaginable.

As St Paul conversed not with Christ in the flesh, so neither did he receive the gospel from any of the apostles who did, but had it by immediate revelation from Christ himself; so that his preaching had the apostolical character, that he taught the things which he had seen and heard of Christ. When he was miraculously called to be an apostle, to qualify him for the office, Christ promised to be his instructor: "I have appeared unto thee," says our Lord, "for this purpose, to make thee a minister, and a witness, both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee," Acts xxvi. 16. Accordingly St Paul, speaking to the Galatians of his own authority as an apostle, tells them, that he was "an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead," Gal. i. 1. And again in the 11th and 12th verses, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which

“ was preached of me is not after man; for
 “ I neither received it of man, neither was
 “ I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus
 “ Christ.”

This revelation to St Paul extended not merely to points of doctrine, but conveyed to him likewise the knowledge of historical facts; as is plain from 1 Cor. xi. 23. where speaking of the institution of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, he says, “ I have received of the Lord that
 “ which also I delivered unto you, that the
 “ Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was
 “ betrayed, took bread, and when he had given
 “ thanks he brake it;” and so goes on to give an historical account of what was said and done at the last supper, agreeing with the account given by those apostles who were present at the transaction.

From these things laid together it is evident, that the apostles were witnesses and teachers of the faith, and had no authority to add any thing to the doctrine of Christ, or to declare new articles of faith.

Now, if the apostles, commissioned directly by Christ himself, and supported by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, had not this power, can any of their successors in the government of the church, without great impiety, pretend to it? Did the bishops and clergy of the ninth and tenth centuries know the articles of the faith better than the apostles did? or were they more powerfully assisted by the Holy Spirit? No

Christian can think it, or say it. Whence is it then that the church of Rome has received the power they pretend to, of making new articles of faith, and dooming all to eternal destruction who receive them not? Can any sober serious Christian trust himself to such guides, and not tremble when he reads the woe denounced by St. Paul, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel,—let him be accursed?"

When the corruptions of the church of Rome were generally felt and complained of, and no applications whatever could prevail to obtain any alteration; the fear of owning an error, and thereby weakening the authority claimed, being more powerful to continue the old errors, than the force of truth, or even of conviction, was to reform them, what had serious Christians left to do, but to seek after, if happily they could find, *the faith once delivered to the saints*; to separate between the old doctrines of the gospel, and the new inventions of men, and to build up a church "upon the foundation of the apostles, Christ Jesus himself being the head corner-stone?"

What has hitherto been said relates merely to the doctrines of the gospel; to points of Christian faith: in these neither the apostles of Christ, nor the church after them, had any authority, but to preach and publish to the world what they had received. If we extend this farther, and say that the apostles and church

after them, had no more authority in any thing else than they had in the articles of the faith, we run into an extreme that can produce nothing but disorder and confusion; which must be the destruction of all Christian societies, and end in making every man a church by himself.

It may be worth our while to consider the grounds of this distinction, as they are to be found in the holy scriptures.

In the xviiith chapter of St Matthew, in the 15th and following verses, we have this direction from our Saviour: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him of his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother: but if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. But if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican."

In cases which fall under this direction, (and some there are without doubt, or there would have been no direction about them), the church has a judicial authority, and a right to inflict the punishment mentioned. This power may be, and often has been, most flagrantly abused: but to say the church has no authority in cases which come under this direction, is to deny not only the authority of the church, but the au-

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thority of Christ likewise, who gave the direction.

This authority of the church is taken notice of by St Paul; and he rebukes the church of Corinth for not making use of it, to separate from them the incestuous person, who had given offence not to one, but to all Christians.

But there is another power which the apostles had and exerted, and which they committed to those who succeeded them, I mean the authority of settling churches, and prescribing rules of order and decency to them.

If we consider St Paul's conduct in the disputes which happened in the church of Corinth, we shall see how carefully he distinguishes between his duty to preach the gospel of Christ just as he had received it, and his authority in matters of order and decency. The Corinthians had been guilty of great misbehaviour in eating the Lord's supper, as if they had forgot the end and the use of it. St Paul, to set them right, gives them an account of this institution; and here he expressly says, that he delivered to them "what he had received of the Lord:" but in directing some circumstances of their behaviour at the supper, he speaks in his own name: "When ye come together to eat," says he, "tarry for one another; and if any man hunger, let him eat at home:" and concludes with reserving to himself the giving farther directions at a proper time: "The rest," says he, "will I set in order when I come."

As he exercised this authority himself, so he committed the like authority to those who succeeded him in the pastoral care. The epistles to Timothy and Titus are full of rules or canons for the government of the respective churches under their care, which were to be supplied, as occasion required, by orders of their own: "For this cause," says St Paul to Titus, "I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city."

Which particulars laid together manifestly shew, that there was a power or authority in particular churches to settle matters of discipline, order, and decency for themselves, and that there were no rules of this kind of universal obligation to all churches.

As the apostles, considered singly as commissioned and inspired teachers, had no authority over the faith, neither had they when met together in council; for the doctrine and gospel of Christ could no more be altered by his twelve apostles than it could be by one of them. We have but one instance of an apostolic council, which was held at Jerusalem, and the proceedings of it are recorded in the xvth of the Acts of the apostles.

The matter here controverted and settled by decree of the council, was plainly a matter of government and discipline, and not of the substance of faith; and it was determined by prudential considerations, arising from the circum-

stances of the Christian church at that time. The case was this: St Paul had converted many among the Gentles, and settled several churches in Asia. The Jewish Christians insisted, that the Gentile converts should be circumcised, and observe the law of Moses. Paul and Barnabas, apostles of the Gentiles, withstood this demand of the Jews, and had, as the words of the text are, "no small dissention and disputation with them." They agreed to refer the question to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and thither they went. The council being assembled, the case was opened with much disputing on both sides: then St Peter rose up, and declared his opinion, and the reasons of it; he reminds them, that he himself was the person chosen by God to be the first preacher of the gospel to the Gentiles, and that God had given a token of his accepting the Gentiles, by giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he had given it to the Jewish Christians, and "put," as his own words are, "no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith;" and then concludes against laying the burden or yoke of the law of Moses upon the Gentile converts.

St Peter's argument is drawn from the case of Cornelius, to whom he was sent by express revelation, to preach the gospel. Cornelius was a Gentile, no observer of the law of Moses; nor was St Peter, when sent to preach to him, instructed to require of him obedience to the law of Moses; and yet in this state God ac-

cepted Cornelius and his household, and the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured on them. And St Peter's conclusion is, that since God accepted Cornelius and his family, without calling them to the observance of the Mosaic law, the observance of the Mosaic law was not a condition to be imposed on the Gentile converts.

After St Peter, Barnabas, and Paul gave an account what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them; which was strengthening St Peter's argument, by shewing that what had happened in the case of Cornelius had also happened in many instances during their ministry among the Gentiles.

St James, bishop of Jerusalem, speaks next: he approves the reasoning of St Peter, and shews, from the ancient prophecies, that the call of the Gentiles into the church of Christ was, from the beginning, the design of Providence: "Wherefore," says he, "my opinion is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God."

It is manifest that this reasoning extends to every part of the ceremonial law, and that the Gentiles were bound no more by one point of that law than by another; and yet we shall find that in the conclusion of the council some points of the law of Moses were required to be observed in the Gentile churches.

It is one thing to be bound to observe the law of Moses as matter of necessary duty, it is

another thing to comply with some parts of that law upon motives of Christian charity and prudence. It was lawful for the Gentile converts to live without observing any part of the law of Moses; but though "all things" are lawful, yet," as St Paul says, "all things" are not expedient;—all things edify not." And again, "Meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse," 1 Cor. viii. 8.

This being the reason of the case, the circumstances of the Christian church of that time weighed with this apostolical council to require of the Gentile converts a compliance with some particulars of the Mosaic law. St James, who opens this advice, gives the reason of it: He considered, that in all the cities where Gentile churches had been planted, there were Jewish converts likewise, who were zealous of the law, and would hold no communication with the Gentiles who ate blood, things strangled, and the like; and therefore, unless the Gentile Christians complied in such particulars, there must be an irreconcilable division in the church of Christ, to the loss of that charity on which the gospel sets so great a price.

St James therefore, after declaring his opinion that the Gentile converts were not bound by the law of Moses, proposes, however, to write to them to "abstain from pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things

"strangled, and from blood." The reason he gives in these words, "For Moses of old time hath in every city," *i. e.* in the cities where Gentile churches were planted, "them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day." From whence it is evident, that the injunctions of the council to the Gentile converts were founded upon prudential considerations with respect to the Jews, and the matters ordained by the council were matters of discipline and government only. The passage understood in this sense contains a very strong argument to justify the decree of the council; for the Jews having been born and bred under the law of Moses, could not easily be persuaded to depart from it, and therefore, unless the Gentile converts could be brought to avoid giving them any offence, there could be no hope of peace in the Christian church.

The reason upon which the decree of the council is founded accounts for the conduct of St Paul in like cases. When he circumcised Timothy, it was because of the Jews which were in those quarters; and when he came to Jerusalem, St James prevailed with him to purify himself according to the usage of the Jews. The argument made use of by St James was the very same with that used by the council: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law; do therefore this which we say to thee, that all may know that thou

"walkest orderly, and keepest the law." This was going a greater length than the council had gone with respect to the Gentiles, "as touching whom," St James says, "we have written and concluded, that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from meat offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication."

There is a question that arises from this case, to know why the particulars mentioned are singled out, when the Jews were strongly attached to other points of the law.

But, if you consider the case, the reason for this distinction will evidently appear: for, as the concern was to prevent the giving offence to the Jews, and thereby to preserve peace and charity in the church of Christ, it was necessary to guard against the practices which open to every body's view in the common occurrences of life. A Jew could never be present at the table of a Christian without having some security that he should not meet with things offered to idols, nor with blood, nor things strangled, otherwise all intercourse between them would be cut off; and though St James, upon the principle of the council, persuaded St Paul to purify himself, yet that had relation to St Paul's particular circumstances; and the same advice would not have been given to any other Christian who was a Gentile believer; for it was not the intention of the council to recommend the

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rites and ceremonies of the law to the Gentile Christians.

But the great difficulty in this case is to know what is meant by fornication, which seems to be an offence of a moral kind, and in which the Jews had no particular concern; how therefore it fell under the direction of the council is hard to say.

It is certain, that if we understood fornication in the common sense of the word, and as it is vulgarly used with us, it can have no meaning in this place, it expressing a thing that had no relation to the matter under consideration of the council.

In respect to things offered to idols, and blood, the Jews were not only forbid the use of them, but were forbidden likewise all communication with those that did use them, though they were strangers, and not bound by the law of Moses: "I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood," Lev. xvii. 12. It is no wonder therefore that the Jews, who were zealous for the law, thought all communication forbidden with those who allowed themselves the eating of blood.

They had the same ground for treating in like manner those who partook of meats offered to idols, which I need not spend your time in proving.

The word *πορνεία*, which we translate *fornication*, has a great latitude, and includes in it all

carnal impurity; and whoever considers the abominable lewdness which made part of the worship paid to the heathen idols, will not think it strange to find the worship of idols and whoredom joined together in the decree of the council. Nor is this peculiar to the council; for if you look into the writings of the New Testament, you will see them joined together in like manner. Thus, in the first of the Corinthians, "Be
 " not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters,—shall inherit the kingdom of God," chap. vi. 9. And in the Revelation of St John, "But I have a few things against thee, because
 " thou hast there them that hold the doctrine
 " of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to
 " eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication," chap. ii. 14. And thus, y. 20. "Notwithstanding, I have a few things
 " against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to
 " commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." Agreeable to this notion, idolatry is styled whoredom in the Old Testament, and the great powers which spread idolatry in the world were characterized under the image of a *great whore*; in which manner of speaking the writers of the Old Testament had led the way: and no body is at a loss to understand their meaning, when they charged the people with going a-whoring after other gods:

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and there is as little reason to misunderstand the council; for what more have they done than to forbid idolatry, and all the impurities that attended it?

What has been said in few words, (very few, the importance of the subject considered), may shew us the foundation and the proper bounds of church authority in holy scripture; and they shew us at the same time the true foundation upon which our reformation from the church of Rome stands. If the church of Rome asks us, why we have departed from some articles, which they account articles of faith? our answer is, because they are no part of *the faith once delivered to the saints*: if they urge us with the authority of the church which has received them, our answer is, no church has, nor have all churches together, any authority to make articles of faith; that "Christ Jesus was the author and the finisher of the faith," to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be taken. If they ask us, why we have discarded much of their ceremony and discipline? we may, without entering into the merit of particular cases, answer, that the church of England has as much authority to appoint rules of order and discipline for their members as the church of Rome has for theirs; that these rules have been settled upon prudential considerations of the circumstances of England, of which the church of England was a far better judge than the church of Rome. But,

Secondly, If, according to the apostolical rule in the text, we are to *contend for the faith once delivered to the saints*, the question will be, where we are to find this faith, and how to distinguish it from the addition of later ages?

When our Saviour came into the world, the case of the Jewish church was in this respect the same with ours: the evil had been long growing, and the ancient prophets had taken notice of it. In the prophet Isaiah God reproves the nation for this crime, that "their fear towards him was taught by the precept of man," chap. xxix. 13. But yet, notwithstanding these admonitions, in our Saviour's time the traditions were in such esteem that they were appealed to in every case as a decisive authority; and the scribes and Pharisees were so secure in this point, that they challenge our Lord to answer this question, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" Matth. xv. 2. The very question this which is daily put to us by the church of Rome, and the darling point insisted on by their emissaries, by which they scare ignorant people into a blind submission to their authority. But hear our Saviour's answer to the question, when put to him, "Why do you also transgress the commandments of God by your tradition?" A question hard to be answered, and which the great rulers of the church of Rome should consider well, for they are much concerned in it.

If the church of Rome pretends to have re-

ceived by oral tradition doctrines derived originally from the apostles, the Jewish doctors had the same plea, and referred their traditions up to Moses, from whom, as they suppose, they received them, by an uninterrupted succession continued to their own times.

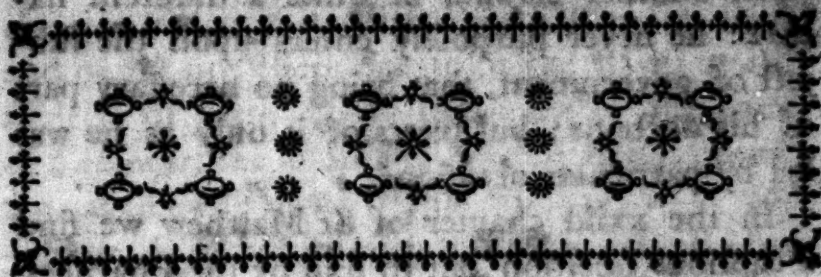
The Jews had the writings of Moses and the prophets, and the church of Rome has the writings of the apostles and evangelists; but neither did the Jews allow their scriptures, nor does the church of Rome allow theirs, to be a complete rule, but both recur to tradition to supply what they suppose to be wanting in their sacred writings. But now, consider how our blessed Saviour treated this pretence of the Jewish church, and it will be a very good direction to us how to behave in a case which is so very much the same; he speaks of them as human inventions, as doctrines of their own and not doctrines of God: "Laying aside the commandment of God," says he, "ye hold the tradition of men," Mark vii. 8. And again, v. 9. "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." In the following verses he shews them how their tradition contradicted the law of Moses, and then tells them, "You make the word of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have delivered;" manifestly considering the written law of Moses as the commandment of God, and the traditions of the elders as the law of men, and of their own making.

Moses and the prophets make the scripture of the Jews, and to them our Lord constantly appeals: he bids the Jews *search the scriptures*; tells them, *they err, not knowing the scriptures*; and when the Pharisees put a question to him concerning divorce, tempting him, his answer is, *What did Moses command you?* And when he told the Pharisees, that on the two commandments, of loving God and our neighbour, *hang all the law and the prophets*, he plainly told them, that the law and the prophets contained the whole of their religion, and that they had no other rule to go by: for had he considered the traditions of the elders as a rule of religion, he must have reduced them to his general precepts likewise.

In the well-known parable of the rich man and Lazarus, our Saviour has, in the person of Abraham, fully determined this point. The rich man desires that Lazarus may be sent from the dead to warn his brethren, that they come not to that place of torment: Abraham refuses this request for this reason, because his brethren wanted no means to instruct them in the right way. What was their rule then? Abraham tells him, *They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.*

The application of this case is so easily made to our own, that there is hardly any reason to insist on it particularly. The Jewish church had Moses and the prophets, and abounded with traditions of their own, taught and received as

essential to their religion. What our Saviour thought of their traditions, what of the law and the prophets, you have heard. The Christian church likewise has the apostles and evangelists; they have also too many traditionary doctrines, which have no foundation in holy writ: what are we to do then? Do we want better authority than that of our Saviour to reject the traditions of men, and to hold fast the doctrine of the apostles and prophets of the gospel, that is, as St Jude exhorts us, to *contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints?*



DISCOURSE XIII.



ROMANS xiii. 1.

*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.
For there is no power but of God: the powers
that be are ordained of God.*

WE have, in this and the following verses, the duty which subjects owe to their temporal governors, both taught and maintained by several reasons and arguments; the sense and propriety of which arguments clearly to understand, it will be necessary for us to consider the circumstances of the time, and place, and persons here concerned.

There is no appearance in the gospel that our Saviour intended to make any alterations in the civil governments of the world. He came

upon another errand, of quite a different nature: he never purposely enters upon the subject of government, that being no necessary part of his doctrine; but treats of it only as he was led by particular occasions.

In the xxiid chapter of St Matthew we find a captious question put to him by the Pharisees, whether it were lawful to pay tribute to the Roman emperor or not? The question arose from hence: There was at that time a sect among the Jews, who held it to be unlawful to pay any tribute to the Roman emperor, or to yield any obedience to his laws. The author of this opinion was Judas of Galilee, who, when the Roman emperor ordered the nation to be taxed, raised upon that account a great rebellion, persuading the people to stand by their liberties, and not to submit to such a mark of slavery as paying of tributs. The fate of this man is related fully by Josephus, and is mentioned likewise by Gamaliel in Acts v. 37. "After this
"man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of
"the taxing, and drew away much people after
"him; he also perished, and all, even as many
"as obeyed him, were dispersed." But though they were for the present dispersed, yet by degrees they gathered strength, and were the authors of many troubles, and in the reign of Claudius were strong enough to ravage and destroy many places in Samaria. Their pretence for freedom was, as we learn from St Chrysostom, that they were the servants of the Lord,

and therefore owed no subjection to any human creature; that they were the freemen of God, and ought not therefore to be the slaves or the subjects of men. This sect went by the name of *Galileans*, the author of it being of that country, as likewise many of his followers.

Now, it is well known that this was a name by which the Christians went in the first ages: they are mentioned under this name by several heathen writers; and that it was in use among all who spoke contemptuously of Christ and his religion, even so late as in Julian's time, we learn from his writings still remaining, where he often speaks of the Christians under the name of *Galileans*. And hence it came to pass, that the Christians going by the name of *Galileans*, were generally thought by the heathens to entertain the same opinions with the sect of that name, that is, they were taken to be men of seditious principles, who refused obedience to earthly princes, and were for setting up an independent government of their own. Thus when Tertullus the orator accuses St Paul, he charges him with being "a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarens," Acts xxiv. 5. Of this calumny we find the unbelieving Jews also making their advantage against the Christians, for thus they accuse them to the magistrates of Thessalonica, "Those who have turned the world upside down are come hither also," Acts xvii. 6.

Upon this ground then it was that the Pharisees put that insidious question to our Saviour, *Is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar?* hoping, no doubt, to have found something whereof to have impeached him before the Roman governor. The collectors of taxes seem likewise to have had the same jealousy concerning our Saviour, when, in the xviith of St Matthew they enquire of St Peter, whether his Master would pay tribute or no? for it is probable by their question, that they took our Lord for one of the new teachers, who set up in defiance of the Roman emperor: to which St Peter answers, *Yes.* And our Saviour, though he intimates that he ought to have been exempted from paying tribute, yet knowing what suspicions there were concerning him, and what use would have been made of his refusal, orders St Peter to go to the sea, and cast an hook, and take the fish that should come up, and open his mouth, where he should find a piece of money; "that take," says he, "and give them as tribute for me and yourself, *lest we should offend them.*"

Now, though our Saviour's business was not either to limit or to enlarge the civil governments of the world, yet this scandal which he and his disciples lay under, urged both him and them to vindicate themselves, and to teach their followers such obedience and submission to the higher powers, as might leave no pretence for such an accusation: accordingly our Saviour, having drawn a confession from the Pharisees

that the tribute-money belonged to Cæsar, answers, "That they should render to Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's."

That the apostles likewise had reference to the same scandal in pressing obedience of all kinds upon their disciples, whether considered as subjects, or servants, or wives, or children, is evident from hence, that they almost always close their instructions of this sort with this argument, "That the word of God be not blasphemed, or evil spoken of:" an argument which, in its own nature, has no nearer relation to civil obedience than to any other good work; and it is as proper to exhort men to temperance and sobriety, to charity, and other the like virtues, that no scandal may be brought on the gospel, as it is to exhort them to obedience to their superiors. This motive therefore being almost ever urged in the case of obedience, shews plainly that the Christians were liable to reproach in this case more than any other. Our Lord bids St Peter pay the tribute, *lest*, says he, *we should offend them*. And thus St Paul, in his epistle to Titus, chap. ii. 5. orders Titus to admonish "wives to be obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed;" and v. 10. to exhort "servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." So likewise in the first epistle to Timothy, chap. vi. 1. the apostle gives this ex-

hortation, "Let as many servants as are under
 "the yoke count their own masters worthy of
 "all honour;" and then he repeats the fore-
 mentioned reason, "That the name of God and
 "his doctrine be not blasphemed." Thus like-
 wise St Peter, pressing obedience to governors,
 gives this reason for it, "For so is the will of
 "God, that with well-doing ye may put to
 "silence the ignorance of foolish men," 1 Pet.
 ii. 15. that is, of such men as scandalize the
 doctrine of the gospel, as if it taught us to claim
 a freedom inconsistent with the obedience that
 subjects, and servants, and children owed to their
 respective superiors: and, with regard to this
 abused notion of Christian freedom, the apostle
 adds, in the very next verse, "As free, and
 "not using your liberty for a cloak of mali-
 "ciousness, but as the servants of God." Be-
 sides these reasons, drawn from the apostles'
 own writings, to shew with what view they so
 frequently insisted upon, and inculcated obe-
 dience of all kinds, we have to the same purpose
 the express authority of St Jerom and St Chry-
 sostom. St Jerom, in his comment upon the
 epistle to Titus, at these words, "Put them in
 "mind to be subject to principalities and powers,"
 gives this reason why the apostle there, and else-
 where, insists on the obligations which Christians
 were under to obey their rulers, *Quia Juda Ga-*
lilaei per illud tempus dogma adhuc vigeat, et ha-
bebat plurimos sectatores—"Because the doc-
 "trine of Judas of Galilee yet prevailed at that

"time, and had many followers." St Chrysostom, in his comment upon the xiiith of the Romans, teaches us the same thing: *Καὶ γὰρ πολλὸς περιφύρετο λόγος τότε, ἐπὶ τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ καὶ καινοτομίᾳ διαβάλλον τὴν ἀποστολὴν, ὅτι ὡς ἐκ ἀνατροπῆς τῶν κοινῶν νόμων, ἅπαντα ὁ ποιῶνται λέγονται.*—

"For there was at that time a strong report that the apostles were seditious and innovators, and that their principles and practices tended to the subversion of the common laws."

From this account it is easy to see what made the apostles so frequently, so earnestly press their new converts to shew a more than ordinary obedience to their masters and governors: the honour of Christ and the gospel was nearly concerned in their behaviour, which ought to be dearer to them than their lives, and to outweigh all other considerations whatever, and therefore they ought to bear every thing rather than give any umbrage to the enemies of the gospel, by pretending upon any account, how plausible soever, to withstand the commands of their lawful governors. And for this reason St Paul more especially labours the point, when he writes to the Christians at Rome, which was the ordinary residence of the Emperor, and where any the least disorder would be the soonest taken notice of, and most improved to the prejudice of the gospel. And if you examine what St Paul has taught concerning obedience and subjection to the higher powers, you will find it answer exactly to these circumstances now set

before you, and to be built upon reasons purposely adapted to convince the error of the Galileans and some judaizing Christians, and to require such an exact and scrupulous obedience, as might clear the gospel and its professors from the scandal thrown on them by the heathen world.

Let every soul, says he, be subject unto the higher powers. This is the doctrine laid down in opposition to such as taught that there were no higher powers who had any claim to their obedience, but that they were under the immediate government of God, and therefore owed no subjection to man. The apostle supports his doctrine with arguments peculiarly adapted to combat the error he opposes, as you will perceive in the following words: *For there is no power, says he, but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.* As if he had said, You argue that you ought to be subject to God only, and to acknowledge no other power or authority but his: what you say is true; but so far is this reason from exempting you from the subjection to temporal power; that, well considered, it will prove just the contrary: for the power of the magistrate is a power delegated from God, and therefore more especially to be regarded by those who pretend in a peculiar manner to be the servants of God. It was obvious to object against this reasoning, that the powers then in being could not be the powers ordained by God, because they so evidently thwarted all

his purposes: they had put to death the Lord of life; they persecuted his followers; they were the supporters of superstition and idolatry, and the main obstacle in the way of the gospel; to prevent which furnishes the apostle purposely adds, *The powers which be, are ordained of God.* From these positions he draws the consequence in direct opposition to the principles and practices of those who were despisers of government: *Whoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.* To resist the ordinance of God was certainly inconsistent with their profession; who pretended to dedicate themselves to the obedience of God, and so entirely, that for that reason they would own no obedience to any one else, lest they should seem to set up another to share with God in his right to their service. The apostle so far allows their principle as to argue from it, and shews them, that they cannot resist the civil power consistently with their resolutions of obeying God; because submitting to our earthly princes is part of the obedience which God requires from us. If we enquire in what particular sense the rulers of the world may be said to be the ordinance of God, and to derive their power and authority from him? we shall find, that the state of the world requires that there should be some to rule, invested with power to protect the innocent, and to defend the weak from the violence of the oppressor; and therefore government is agreeable

to the will of God, and to pretend an exemption from it would be acting in opposition to his will, and the order of his establishment.

As some pretended to withdraw their obedience from the Prince, because they had been made partakers of the freedom of the gospel, so others, who were in a state of servitude, thought they had a right to throw off their bondage, supposing a state of slavery to be inconsistent with the liberty of the gospel of Christ; they went upon the same reason which the others did, and pleaded their relation to God and Christ as a full release from the condition of slaves. The apostle therefore uses the same way of arguing to them, and exhorts them to yield obedience to their masters as unto the Lord, as unto God; shewing them that their masters, with respect to temporal affairs, stood in the place of God, and they were therefore to submit unto them as unto God. Thus in the viith chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians the apostle lays down this general rule, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he is called;" that is, as he explains himself, whether he be servant, or whether he be free, let him not think that his condition is repugnant to his religion: if he be a servant, let him so continue. "Servants," says he, in the viith of the Ephesians, "be obedient unto them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service,

“ as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ,
 “ doing the will of God from the heart; with
 “ good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and
 “ not to men.” The same is repeated, with
 some small variety of expression, in the epistle
 to the Colossians, chap. iii. : and in 1 Tim. vi.
 he treats of this matter with some warmth,
 and affirms, that this doctrine of obedience is
 the law of God, and that whoever denies it
 “ consents not to wholesome words, even the
 “ words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the
 “ doctrine which is according to godliness; but
 “ is proud, knowing nothing, doating about
 “ questions, and strife of words,—supposing
 “ gain to be godliness.” In all which it is plain
 he refers to the opinion of such as taught that
 the gospel had introduced a perfect state of
 freedom, dissolving all the ancient ties between
 masters and servants; in opposition to which he
 teaches them, that their being Christians should
 make them better, not worse servants; for that
 they ought to obey from the heart, as serving
 God, and not men. St Peter likewise uses the
 same argument with the same view: “ Submit
 “ yourselves to every ordinance of man for the
 “ Lord’s sake.” Hence then it is plain, that
 the apostle’s argument is directed against those
 principally, who were for dissolving all the obli-
 gations between the prince and the subject, who
 were for making religion the cloak of disloyalty,
 and for throwing down all power and authority
 of earthly princes, upon the specious pretence of

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setting up the Lord Jesus. And therefore, as to the original of the prince's power, we may, upon the apostle's word, assert it to be divine, as being derived immediately from God, and used and exercised in his name, and by his authority.

To proceed: The apostle uses a second argument to enforce his doctrine, laid down at first in the words of the text, *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.* And here the first doubt is, where the argument begins; for the words immediately following those last treated of may either be taken as the first of the second argument, or as a farther conclusion drawn from the first; *And they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.* If they who resist the power do resist the ordinance of God, it may certainly be affirmed by evident consequence, that they who resist shall receive to themselves damnation; so evident a consequence, that it can lose nothing of its force, though these words should not be understood to contain it, but should be taken as introducing a new argument, as upon the whole I incline to think they ought to be taken. For the words immediately following contain a reason of something going before; *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil:* but this will not prove that all who resist shall be damned; for rulers are not the judges in the case of damnation: but if we understand the apostle in these words, *All who resist shall receive to themselves damnation,* as entering

upon a new topic, and setting forth the certain evil consequences which even in this life should attend the seditious, who would render themselves justly obnoxious to the powers of the world, and be liable to their censure, it then very properly follows, *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil.*

To shew that the language in the original admits of this sense, or that the present division of verses is no authority on one side or the other, is a labour I may well save myself in this audience. Let us go on then to consider the argument: It is drawn from the common topic of hope and fear, and represents to us the danger of disobeying our governors, by setting before us not only their power, but their right and their duty to punish, when we refuse to acknowledge their authority; and, by shewing the prince's duty to punish such offenders, in consequence of the commission given him by God, it tacitly warns us to expect no protection from God against the just anger and indignation of our princes, since, in punishing the stubborn offenders, they do but execute the will and command of God; in which case it is absurd to depend upon any assistance or protection from him, in opposition to his own authority delegated to earthly powers.

The gospel does, in every page, encourage its disciples to bear up against the afflictions of the world, to rejoice when they are persecuted and evil entreated, and to be exceeding glad, because

their reward shall be great in heaven : but, lest those who suffered as seditious subjects should entertain themselves with these hopes, the apostle takes care to represent the prince as acting by the will and power of God in punishing such offenders. What fruit then could these sufferings yield, which were not only the effect of man's wrath, but also of the justice of God ? St Peter, on the same subject, has evidently the same view before him : " If ye be reproached," says he, " for the name of Christ, happy are ye, " for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on " you.——But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer : " for, as he had before observed, " What glory is it, if " when ye shall be buffeted for your faults ye " take it patiently ? "

St Paul's second argument therefore is not a mere prudential motive to obedience, shewing us what may probably be expected from an angry governor, but goes farther, and teaches, that we shall not only suffer, but also deserve to suffer, which every Christian ought rather to fear than the evil itself. The particular steps of the argument are as follow : *They that resist shall receive to themselves damnation, i. e. punishment or judgment.* The reason follows : *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.* It is plain here, from the force of the inference, that, by *good works*, obedience is especially meant, and, by *evil works*, resistance ; for otherwise the apostle's reason will not contain the proof of his

doctrine: for it is not certain that those who resist shall be punished, because rulers are a terror to evil works, unless resistance be meant or included in evil works; and yet the apostle is now disputing with those who thought the gospel justified them in not submitting to their governors, and who could not therefore think the resistance here spoken of an evil work. Does he then beg this point, of all others in this controversy the most material? No; but he builds on the strength of his first argument, where he had shewn, that whoever resists the power resisteth the ordinance of God, which is enough to prove resistance an evil work; which being proved, he goes on to shew the prince's power over such workers of iniquity: *Wilt thou then, says he, not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.* This was a strange assertion, if understood of good works in general: St Paul knew surely, that to obey the gospel, to reject idolatry, to renounce the polluted feasts of the Gentiles, was to do good; yet he knew that those who did so, far from having the praise of the rulers, were daily punished and tormented by them: he knew that to preach the gospel was a good work, and yet he knew that he for so doing had been in perils often, in bonds and imprisonments, and in danger of his life: how then could he assure his converts, that if they did that which was good they should have praise of their rulers, when they felt the contrary every day? But this difficulty vanishes, if

we take *good* in that limited sense in which the apostle uses it: *Rulers*, says he, *are not a terror to good works, but to evil*; it naturally follows, *Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same*. It is evident, by the course of reasoning, that the *good* in the latter part of the verse must mean the same thing with *good works* in the first part; and I observed before, that the apostle's argument necessarily required that, by *good works*, we should especially understand the work of *obedience*; consequently, when the apostle says, *Do that which is good*, his meaning is, *Pay due obedience*; and then his proposition is universally true: for obedience is a good work, and let princes be what they will, they will always praise and encourage obedience; which is one good reason for obeying, in all cases, as far as we can, for we are sure to get this by it, a quiet life at least.

Besides, this exposition suits with St Paul's main design, which was to inculcate obedience to the higher power. What other good then could he properly recommend on this subject? Temperance, chastity, charity, and all other virtues, were out of this question: obedience was the thing doubted of. If the apostle then keeps to his point, the good thing he recommends must needs be the good of obedience; and the word in the original, which is rendered by the word *good* in our translation, is appropriated both by St Paul and St Peter to denote the good of obedience, in opposition to the evil spirit

which set a government at nought. The promise made to obedience is in these words, *Thou shalt have praise of the same.* What is meant by *praise* may be understood by the parallel place in St Peter, who speaks of governors sent *for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well*: where praise being opposed to punishment, must denote protection and encouragement, which are the only proper rewards which good subjects can expect from their governors; and so it signifies in the place before us: and this will help us to understand the following words, *For he is the minister of God to thee for good.* The apostle had promised reward to the obedient: he supports it by this reason, *For he, the ruler, is the minister of God to thee for good.* To be a minister for good then must denote his being appointed by God as a dispenser of rewards, or else the argument is lame: for if any other good be meant, the consequence is false; for it does not follow that the obedient shall be rewarded, because the prince is a minister of some other good, which is no way related to rewarding the good; but if he be appointed by God to dispense rewards to those who do well, and if obedience be the good work, I have then good reason to expect reward for my obedience. And this sense will appear undeniably to be the true one, by comparing the former and latter part of the verse together. For the apostle goes on, *But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain.*

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Then he adds the very same argument which he had used before, *For he is the minister of God.* A minister for what? He had before, where he treated of him as a dispenser of rewards, called him *a minister of God for good*; here he speaks of him as a dispenser of punishment, he should therefore have called him *a minister of God for evil*: but that was too harsh an expression, and therefore he uses a periphrasis instead of it; for he is the minister of God, *a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.* This shews us how to expound his being a minister for good, that is, a protector and encourager to him that doth well. Compare all the parts, and I think there can be no doubt. The evil is threatened; why? because the ruler is the minister of God. The minister, to what purpose? he tells you, *A revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.* On the other side, the obedient are encouraged to expect reward? Why? For the same reason; because the ruler is a minister of God for this purpose also; and, consequently, a minister for good must denote a dispenser of good to him that doth good.

What good we are to expect from kings and governors St Paul has told us, requiring that we should *pray for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty,* 1 Tim. ii. 2. The peace and quiet of society is the very end of temporal government, and when it is duly promoted by those in authority, then have they

a just claim to be esteemed as ministers of God for good to the people, who, in return for this good received of the prince, are bound on their part to yield obedience and submission, which is the thing will entitle them to the praise and protection of those in authority over them.

These are the two arguments by which St Paul supports his doctrine of obedience. That I have rightly divided them he himself shall bear witness, who, in the next verse, sums up his reasoning in these words: *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.* You see he refers to two arguments, and two only: one drawn from wrath, one from conscience. The argument from wrath respects the present life and the magistrate's power; for the wrath of God is included in the argument from conscience, which indeed is no argument without it; for what is conscience where there is no fear of God? You must then submit for wrath, because the magistrate has the power of God to execute wrath on him that doth evil: you must submit for conscience, for he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God. The sixth verse contains no new argument, but mentions a particular instance of obedience, the paying tribute; which is therefore particularly mentioned, because, as I before observed, it was the very ground of this dispute.

I have but one thing more to observe upon St Paul, which is, that under the duties of subjection he comprehends not only those owing to

kings and princes, but those owing to every superior, nay, those owing even to our equals: *Render, says he, to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour;* and concludes with this general exhortation, *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another;* referring even the duties of love to this head of subjection. I mention this now for the use I shall make of it hereafter.

It is plain that the apostle's concern was with such as denied even the right of government, and were for being every man his own king; it was not therefore before him to consider distinctly the measures and limits of the power of earthly princes; nor can the argument be extended to reach this point. He asserts the magistrate to be ordained of God, and the ruler's power to be the ordinance of God: but it will not from hence appear what are the limits of this power; for all power ordained by God is not infinite, nor of the same extent. All our natural powers are ordained by God, and he has divided to every man as seemeth best to him. The least power is his ordinance as well as the greatest; and therefore the extent of power cannot appear from this, that it is the ordinance of God, since all power, whether great or little, is ordained by him. Nor has the scripture, that I know of, ever meddled with this point: it has commanded obedience to all governors, and left us the laws and constitutions of our country to know who they are, and what they are.

The apostle, in teaching this doctrine, was chiefly concerned for the honour of the gospel, and exhorted to obedience, that the name of God and of Christ might not be blasphemed. Had St Paul taught the Christians at Rome, that the Emperor was ordained by God for their good, and that they were bound to obey him as long as he was good to them, and no longer, would this, do you think, have cleared them of the scandal they lay under of being enemies to government? would they have had *praise* of the *power* for this doctrine? No; it would rather have justified all the reproaches cast upon them, and confirmed the powers of the world in the opinion, that, if ever Christianity prevailed, their authority must sink.

I cannot conclude my discourse without taking notice of St Peter's doctrine upon this subject. His epistle is directed to the strangers scattered throughout divers countries; for in the ninth year of the Emperor Claudius, the Jews, under which name the Christians were comprehended, as is plain from the xviiith of the Acts, were banished Rome for tumults and seditions, occasioned by their disputes. This banishment is mentioned by Suetonius, and the writer of the Acts, in the place last quoted. St Peter, therefore, in his epistle, was necessarily to mention and press obedience, the want of which had occasioned their present distress. Thus then he exhorts his scattered flock:—"Dearly beloved, "I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, ab-

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“ stain from fleshly lusts, which war against the
 “ soul, having your conversation honest among
 “ the Gentiles; that whereas they speak against
 “ you as evil doers,” that is, as disobedient sub-
 jects, which is also, as I shewed, St Paul’s notion
 of evil doers, “ they may, by your good works
 “ which they behold, glorify God in the day of
 “ visitation.” Then follows the general precept,
*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for
 the Lord’s sake, whether it be to the king, or
 to governors, and the like* *.

Here then St Peter is supposed to have deter-
 mined the great point, and taught us that kings
 are the ordinance of man, made by the people:
 if he has, I am sure he has contradicted St Paul,

* If we compare St Peter and St Paul together, and con-
 sider the subject they were upon, we shall find it necessary to
 take the τὸ ἀγαθόν in the restrained sense here mentioned:
 for what other good could they mean, consistently with their
 argument and their subject? For the only evil thing which
 they had to contend with was an opposition to all government
 in general: the good therefore they would recommend was
 necessarily to be submission in general. In the same restrained
 sense St Peter sometimes uses καλόν, 1st epist. chap. ii. 12. &c.
 ἵνα ἢ καταλαλῶσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κακοποιῶν, ἐν τῶν καλῶν ἔργων
 ἀποκτείναντες, δοξάσῃ τὸν Θεὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς. At v. 13.
 and at v. 20. it plainly appears, that ἀγαθοποιεῖν is equivalent
 to καλοποιεῖν, and that both expressions mean a general sub-
 mission to government. We meet with the same word again
 in the course of the argument, chap. iii. 5. &c. where St Peter
 having mentioned the duty of submission which Sarah paid
 to Abraham, exhorts wives to follow her example, whose
 daughters they were, ἀγαθοποιούσαι which he explains by
 ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσι. So that there can be no
 doubt of the use of the word in this place.

who has expressly told us, that *the powers which be are ordained of God*: which clear doctrine of St Paul should, I think, make us cautious how we expound St Peter to a different meaning. St Peter's original words are, *πᾶσι ἀνθρώποις ὑποτασσέσθαι* how they came to be rendered *to every ordinance of man*, I profess myself not to understand. *Κτίσις* signifies sometimes in scripture *a creature*, and the adjective joined with it signifies *human*; according to which St Peter's doctrine is plain, "Submit yourselves to every *human creature*, or "to every man, for the Lord's sake." How *ὑποτασσέσθαι* should signify *a creature*, or any thing else made by man, I know not: *Ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία* is not wisdom made by man, but the wisdom which man has, given him by God: so *ὑποτασσέσθαι* is not a creature made by man, but an *human creature*: and that this is St Peter's true meaning will appear from the whole tenor of his discourse. It is usual with the best writers to set down the doctrine in general words, and then to deduce the particulars. This is St Peter's method in the place before us: Submit, says he, yourselves to every human creature. This is the general point. He immediately descends to particulars: He begins with the king, as supreme; goes from him to governors appointed by him: at the 18th verse he comes to servants, whom he commands to be subject to their masters with all fear: when he has done with them, he goes to wives, ordering them to be in subjection to their own husbands. All these particulars are plainly

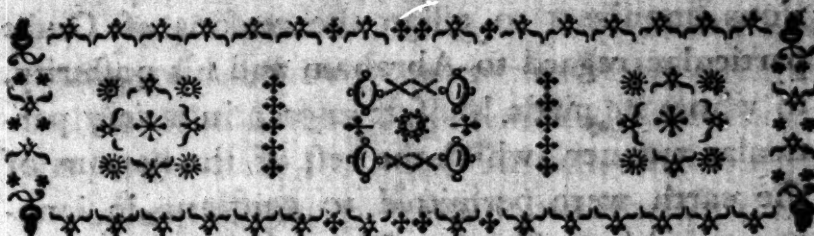
included in the general rule; and, consequently, there is as much reason to say, from St Peter, that the husband of every woman is made by the people, as that the king of every country is. Nay, St Peter goes lower; and, as a precept deducible from his general rule, he commands us to love the brotherhood: so that I may as well say that I made my brother, because I must love him, as that I made my king, because I must obey him. I observed to you before how St Paul derived the duties of subjection so low as to the love of one another; St Peter, you see, does the same. St Paul's general rule is, chap. xiii. 7. *Render to all their dues*: St Peter's is, *Submit to every human creature*. St Paul concludes, v. 8. *Owe no man any thing but to love one another*: St Peter, chap. v. 5. *Yea, all of you be subject one to another*. You see the same reasoning in both, that both take in all degrees of duty into the doctrine of submission.

You see how nearly the apostles agree. If St Paul has said, that the higher powers are ordained of God, has not St Peter said as much, by telling us, that so is the will of God, that with well-doing we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men? If St Paul has said, we must obey for conscience sake, are we not under the same obligation, by knowing, from St Peter, that obedience is the will of God?

The commentators have given themselves unnecessary trouble, in enquiring into the characters of the princes at the time these epistles were written; for the dispute was with those who rejected

all sorts of government, whether they were under good or bad princes: with the temporal rights of princes they meddled not. St Peter, who wrote to the dispersed in Asia, where the governments had always been despotic, exhorted them, in the first place, to due obedience to the king, and then to those who were put in authority under him; whereas St Paul, in writing to the Romans, where the form of government was not fully established, being in the hands of the Emperor, sometimes with and sometimes without the concurrence of the senate, made choice of an expression that has avoided that difficulty, and directs obedience to be paid to the higher powers, without determining who they were; which was a point in which he had no right to interpose his authority.

I shall leave this subject, without drawing any consequences, excepting one only, for the sake of which I entered into this enquiry; namely, That the scriptures are not to be tortured to speak in favour of one side or another; for they stand clear of all disputes about the rights of princes and subjects; so that such disputes must be left to be decided by principles of natural equity, and the constitution of the country.



DISCOURSE XIV.



GENESIS xviii. 19.

For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

THE words of the text are the words of the Lord concerning Abraham, the father of the faithful, and they contain the reason why the Lord made choice of Abraham, to distinguish him from the rest of the world, to make of him *a great and a mighty nation*, a nation to whom should be committed the oracles of God. Abraham, says the Lord, in the verse before the text, *shall surely become a great and mighty nation; and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.*

It has been matter of great difficulty with curious enquirers to assign the reasons of God's particular regard to Abraham and his posterity, to whom he made himself known in a very particular manner, whilst the rest of the nations of the earth were permitted to continue in ignorance and superstition. I intend not to examine all the reasons that have, or may be assigned for this dispensation of Providence; but, since God himself has been pleased to give one reason for his particular regard to Abraham, it highly concerns us to consider it, as holding forth to us the very best instruction by what means we may render ourselves acceptable to God, and draw down a blessing upon ourselves and our posterity: *Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him: For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*

You see now the connection of the text with the verse that goes before it, and the reason given for the distinguishing mercy bestowed on Abraham; God saw that Abraham would so rule and govern his children and his household, as to make them keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment, and therefore he determined to raise him into a *great and mighty nation*. This reason is plainly founded on these

two propositions, and supposes the truth of them, viz. First, That it is the duty of every father and master of a family so to command his children and household that they shall keep the way of the Lord: and, secondly, That the same duty is incumbent on the governors and magistrates of all nations. If you suppose that the virtue commended in Abraham is proper only to fathers and masters of families, and has no relation to the duty of a public magistrate, the reason given in the text for making Abraham *a great and mighty nation* is a very absurd one: for if the magistrate has nothing to do to command the observance of the ways of the Lord, Abraham's disposition so to govern and command could be no reason for making him the head of a great nation; nay, it would rather be a very good reason to keep all public authority out of his hands: for if the magistrate transgresses the limits of his authority, whenever he uses his authority for the preservation of religion, to raise a man to be the head of a nation because you foresee he will so use his authority, is to raise him to be a magistrate because you foresee he will transgress the limits of his commission. Since then God has declared that he raised Abraham to be a great nation, because he foresaw that he would command those under his authority to keep the way of the Lord, he has at the same time declared it to be the duty of every magistrate so to command and govern the nation, the great family committed to his care, that the

ways of the Lord, that justice and judgment may be observed.

It has been matter of great dispute whether government is derived from the paternal authority, and is only the extension of it, or from the consent and choice of the people; a point of greater curiosity than use, since the rights of nations will be determined by their respective laws and usages, and not by the speculations of philosophers. But as to the case of virtue and religion, it is evident that every magistrate's duty with respect to his people, is the same with that which every father naturally has with respect to his children and household. Abraham was therefore to be made a great and mighty nation, because he would command his children and household to keep the way of the Lord: a manifest proof that the care and command which he exercised as father of the family was proper to be extended to whole nations, otherwise this care over his family could be no reason for extending his authority over a great and mighty nation. And indeed the magistrate's care with respect to the religion of his people, and the father's with respect to the religion of his family, are so much the same, that they must necessarily stand or fall together; for both have the same reasons to support them, and both are equally liable to the same objections. If the father of a family has his authority from God, and rules over not only his own children, but the servants and creatures of the Almighty, and ought there-

fore to have a concern for God and religion, is the case of the magistrate different? Are not his subjects also the creatures and servants of God? and is he not the minister and vicegerent of God, and therefore bound, in the first place, to have regard to his honour, who is the common Master of him and of his servants? If the happiness of a family, and of every member of it, consists in a due conformity to the principles of virtue and reason, and it be therefore the father's duty, even out of natural affection to his children, to guard them against vice and immorality, is the happiness of a kingdom, and the members of it, less concerned in the virtue of the people? or ought a prince less to regard the welfare and prosperity of his people? Turn it which way you will, the arguments are still the same, and equally applicable to both cases.

If you object to the magistrate's authority in religion, that temporal rewards and punishments are improper to be employed in the cause of religion, are they not equally improper in the hands of a father as of a prince? If the subjects have reason to direct them, and ought therefore to be left to themselves in all matters of conscience, are not your sons and your daughters reasonable creatures too? and have they not the same plea to make to exempt them from the authority of a father? If religion be something internal, and of which the magistrate cannot judge, because he knows not the heart of man,

is a father better qualified to judge the heart of his son or daughter than the magistrate is to judge the heart of his subjects? In every view the objections are equally frivolous; or equally strong in both cases.

From the text thus opened and explained, I shall take an occasion to enquire, Wherein the care of religion, as well public as private, doth consist; and to justify the means which are necessary to the support of it.

If we consider the nature and disposition of mankind, we shall easily perceive that two things are especially necessary to guard the practice of virtue and religion, instruction and correction; one, a proper remedy for the weakness of the understanding, the other for the perverseness of the will. Where these two are joined together, where the same person has a right to instruct and correct, the instruction is properly authoritative; and this is the case both of parents and magistrates; and therefore Abraham's care for his family, which without doubt included instruction, is expressed by the word *command*: *He will command his children and his household, that they shall keep the way of the Lord.* And the same precept, given by God to the children of Israel for the instruction of their posterity, and which is called *teaching their children* in Deut. xii. 19. is in chap. xxxii. 46. called *commanding their children*: *And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day; which ye shall command your*

children to observe, to do all the words of this law.

This duty princes cannot perform personally to all their people, and therefore there has been an order of men set apart to this work in every civilized nation in the world; and, upon the foot of natural religion, there is no question to be made but that the supreme power in every nation has a full right to appoint and constitute these public teachers and ministers of religion. The people of Rome had as good a title to chuse priests as to chuse consuls; and had their religion been right, no fault could have been found in the constitution of their priesthood: but this right was under the law of Moses limited to one family, and the priesthood under the gospel is confined to such methods of conveyance as Christ and his apostles have appointed or approved; and the Christian priesthood being in all Christian nations owned and established by the public, they have the commission and authority of the magistrate for the edification of the people.

The power of correction is proper to be preserved in the hand of the magistrate, and is never better applied than for the punishment of wickedness and vice, and for the maintenance of true religion and virtue.

As these methods are necessary for the promoting and preserving the virtue of nations, and establishing public happiness and tranquillity, which so much depend on it, so are they likewise for the good government and improvement of

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private families; and every father, by natural right, has power to instruct, and within proper restraints to use correction, for the good and benefit of those under his care.

As to instruction, considered separate from correction, he must be a great friend to libertinism who has any thing to object against it. Some have thought, that since God has given all men reason to direct them, all men should be left to their reason to discover the general truths of religion and morality, without having any principles or notions instilled into them by others, which they esteem as so many prejudices only: but not to insist how contrary this is to all the rules and precepts of scripture relating to the duty of fathers and mothers, and to the practice of all nations, it is sufficient to observe, that had God intended that all men should be left to the discoveries of their own reason in matters of duties, it had been necessary for him to have supplied all men with leisure for speculation as well as with reason; for experience shews that the generality of men, in the present state of things, are not able, for want of leisure and education, to be their own masters; so far from it, that, in conjunction with all the helps that are at present afforded them, great numbers continue ignorant to a degree hardly to be imagined, and were these helps to be removed, we could expect nothing in the room of them but the grossest ignorance and superstition.

If men have so much reason as to be able to

discover their duty without assistance, as those who would deliver them from the bondage of instruction suppose them to have, it is certain they have reason enough to distinguish between truth and falsehood when proposed to them by others, and are not therefore in more danger of being betrayed in acting contrary to their reason by instruction, than by being left to themselves: and as for those who have not reason enough to enable them to direct themselves, or to make them capable of receiving instructions from others, they are fit only to be governed by other methods.

It is very certain that general errors have been perpetuated by traditionary instruction, as well as general truths; but if for this reason an end must be put to all instruction, what one thing of use can be preserved in life, if we will be so fair as to carry the argument to its full extent? Many die daily by eating and drinking; what then? Must the world be starved, because you can tell us of some who have suffered by intemperance? or is there a greater reason to leave the world in ignorance, because some, through false teachers, have been miserably deceived?

But the strongest objections ly against the use of correction in matters of religion. All are so sensible of the necessity of punishments to preserve the peace and order of the world, and to protect the innocent against the violence of sinners, that the magistrate is allowed on all hands a right to punish all crimes which are prejudicial

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to the public, or to the interest of private men. A concession this not to be despised in behalf of religion; for our duty to God does so concur in all things with our duty to our neighbour, that he who punishes offences and injuries offered to men, will undoubtedly so far punish vice and immorality. And this concession being made, the plea for excluding the magistrate from matters of religion can only affect such cases where the honour of God alone is concerned; for all offences against men are allowed to be punished. There remain only then the offences against God to be exempted from the terrors of this world, such as profaneness, impiety, and the like, upon which they think there ought to be no restraint from the magistrate.

The great reason assigned for all this is, that punishments inflicted by the temporal powers cannot make men religious; they can only constrain men to a compliance with the law in their outward behaviour, but cannot reach to the purifying their hearts and consciences, in the clearness and integrity of which the virtue of religion does consist.

But it ought, in the first place, to be considered, that such impiety is truly prejudicial to the public, as it tends, by the contagion of ill example, to corrupt the members of the commonwealth. The reverence men have for God is the very best foundation of obedience to temporal governors; this makes them willing to discharge their duty faithfully to the public, and

to private men. Take away this reverence and regard for God, and few will see any reason to obey the laws of man any farther than is necessary to their own security. But what an alteration would it make in a government, were the subjects, instead of being willing to obey, to lay hold on all opportunities of offending with impunity? No vigilance of the magistrate could be sufficient to restrain the iniquity of multitudes inclined to do evil. Whoever therefore makes way for this corruption of manners, so prejudicial to the welfare and happiness of mankind, is liable to punishment even as an enemy to the state, and the concession made the magistrate to punish offences against the public will entitle him to inflict vengeance upon those who openly affront the majesty of God, either by denying his being, or his government of the world.

But, secondly, It is want of the knowledge of human nature which leads men to make this objection: for though it is very true, that the sinner, who abstains from vice or immorality merely out of the fear of temporal punishment, cannot be said to act upon a religious principle in so doing, or to render an acceptable service to God, yet we must consider not only the immediate influence which punishments have, but the consequence which they are naturally apt to produce. If you keep a sinner from vice through fear at first, it will by degrees grow habitual to him to do well; his relish for vice will abate, and by the length of practice he will come to

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take pleasure in virtue, how uneasy soever it might sit upon him at first; and whenever this change is effected, the man is truly religious: for what is a religious disposition, unless this, to take pleasure in doing well? This happy change often proceeds from less happy beginnings. We see in children every day, that their propensity to some vices is by degrees wholly removed by the watchful eye and hand of a good parent, and we may observe the same effect in men from like causes. And will you say, that when a man is grown to be habitually virtuous, that he has no true religion in him, because he was at first reclaimed from vice by temporal fears? If not, you must allow that these fears are not destructive of religion.

But I have said enough to shew, and also to justify the means necessary to be used in discharging the duty recommended in the text; and I shall apply myself, in what remains, to exhort every man to do his part, and to make all, as far as his influence reaches, *keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment.*

The magistrate is, in the first place, concerned to be watchful over the manners of the people, and to be jealous for the honour of God. In this consists the stability of nations; for "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of the people." This case descends from the supreme head of justice to every officer of the kingdom, in proportion to the power communicated to him; and every magi-

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strate, who connives at open impiety, is false both to God and the king. But I shall press this part of the exhortation no farther, which may perhaps concern but very few in this place: but give me leave to add under this head, that private men, who are vested with no part of the public authority, are capable of doing great service even by shewing themselves pleased that others should do their duty. It is a great discouragement to magistrates, when they have not only the violence of sinners to contend with, but also the resentments and indignation of the innocent. A consideration that ought to be maturely weighed, in an age that is not, I am sure, too good to stand in need of reformation.

Next to the magistrate, the chief care of virtue and religion lyes upon fathers and masters of families. The kingdom is one great family, and it is made up of the small ones; and if due care be taken in private families for the government and instruction of youth, the public will soon see and feel the happy effects of it. Permit me therefore to remind all parents of the duty they owe to God, their country, and their children, to take care that those, who are by the laws of God and man committed to their government, be virtuously educated, and instructed in the way of the Lord. This God requires of you; his creatures they are, whom you call your children; they owe obedience to him in the first place, and it is his authority which you exercise over them, and if they perish for want of timely

instruction and correction, he will require their souls at your hands.

Parents have a trust likewise reposed in them by their country. There is nothing of greater consequence to the public than that the youth of the nation should be trained up to virtue and industry; that the seeds of religion should be sown betimes in their hearts, and cherished by proper encouragement. These are the only methods from which we can have any hopes to see our country supplied with honest and worthy men. It is but reasonable to expect from parents, that they should, out of natural affection, seek to promote the happiness of their children; and since the same care which is necessary to form them to be good subjects, is also necessary to lay the foundation of their own happiness and prosperity in the world, this care is wholly entrusted to parents, who ought to look upon themselves as responsible to their country for the future behaviour of their children.

But farther: If parents would but consider the condition of those children whom they have brought into the world, they would find themselves obliged, by the strongest ties of natural affection, to guard them against the certain miseries of this life and of the next, by seasoning their minds with principles of virtue and religion. How wretched, do you think, are those parents, who live to see their children made miserable by vice? And what an addition must it be to their misfortune, if it is attended with

this reflection, that it was want of early care in them, which led the way to this ruin and misery? How often is it that men remember with detestation the negligence and indulgence of their parents, when either they find themselves useless to the world and themselves, for want of that early care which should have been bestowed on them; or exposed to misery, to an untimely end, or to a life of shame and reproach, by those evil inclinations, which grew headstrong in them for want of being pruned in their tender years!

You see then what strong obligations parents are under to be diligent in the discharge of this duty, which they owe to God, their country, and their children; and we might promise ourselves happy days to come, were there a performance answerable to these obligations. In many cases indeed parents are disabled from discharging this duty, through ignorance and poverty; and what must become of such families, where the fathers and mothers can scarcely, with all their labour, provide food and raiment? so far are they from being able to attend to the education and instruction of their children. And this necessity of many poor families among us gave rise to the institution of public schools, maintained by contributions, for the instruction and education of the poor; an institution which, however serviceable to the poor of our country, is calculated to promote nobler views than those of private interest and advantage to any one set

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of men, and tends directly to the public good, and the benefit of all.

The passions of men considered, it is not to be expected, that those who are permitted to grow wild and untamed in their youth should prove harmless, much less useful and beneficial to society, in their more advanced years. Necessity is a great temptation to wickedness, and leads men to use fraud or violence to support their vices; and if they have nothing but their corrupt affections to direct them, can it be hoped that they should withstand these temptations? Idle and undisciplined boys commonly prove loose and vicious young men, and often fall a sacrifice to the severity of the law before they become old ones. Thieves and robbers must be punished, or the innocent must be ruined; so far the rigour of the law is justified: but is it not a deplorable case, and to a Christian country a great reproach, that great care should be taken to punish wickedness, and little or none to prevent it? And yet this is the case where the instruction of the poor is neglected, and they are left to pursue the corrupt inclinations of nature to their own destruction. This mischief is in some measure provided for by the charity-schools; and by breeding up the poor to be honest and diligent, the rich are saved from the violence of wicked necessitous men; the poor are rescued from wickedness, and the punishments due to it; and so many useful and beneficial hands are gained to the public.

Farther; Not only the good order and peace of civil society is provided for by these charitable institutions, but also the peace of the church of Christ, by training up youth to be orderly and well-behaved members of it; an end which every Christian, who has any regard for his holy profession, must take pleasure in promoting. But carry this consideration into its remoter consequences, the happiness to which many souls may arrive through the influence which a pious education may have upon the whole course of their lives, and nothing will be wanting to give us a just conception of the usefulness of this design, or to encourage us to be liberal and generous in contributing to the support of it. If every gift bestowed for the honour of God, or for the good of our country, or for the sake of a poor brother, shall have its reward, how abundantly shall this charity be recompensed, which serves all these purposes at once; which brings maintenance to the poor, instruction to the ignorant, and opens to the miserable a way to happiness; which provides for the order of civil government, and the peace of Christ's church on earth; referring all to the glory and honour of him, who is Lord of the world which now is, and of that which is to come? Give therefore according as God has blessed you. Here are many who ask your help; the poor, your country, the church of Christ, which entreats for these her helpless children; and One there is who looks on, and

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will not forget the love you shew to the meanest
of his members for his sake, Jesus Christ, our
Lord; To whom with the Father, and the Holy
Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, henceforth,
and for evermore. Amen.

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